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TRAVELER

Nobody Knows This World Better
DECEMBER 2012/JANUARY 2013

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2nd Annual

Best of the World

Our 20 Must-See
Places for 2013

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See the wild side of **SOUTH AFRICA**

Going on safari is the thrill of a lifetime, and in South Africa there are abundant game viewing options—on foot, in open-air vehicles, and even on elephant-back. No matter which you choose, the memories of life in the bush will stay with you forever.

WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE

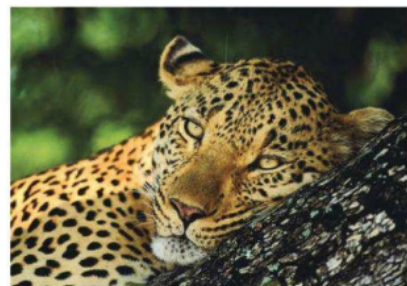
The best known safari destination in South Africa is **Kruger National Park**. Located in the northeast corner of the country along the border with Mozambique, this remarkable conservation area spans the provinces of **Mpumalanga** and **Limpopo**, with more than 7,500 square miles of land and 16 distinct natural regions. The southern end of the park, which has the most developed tourism facilities, is the most visited.



South Africa is ideal for viewing the “Big Five” in their natural habitat.

Kruger is a renowned location for “**Big Five**” viewing: lion, leopard, elephant, buffalo, and rhinoceros. In addition, you can spot giraffes, zebras, antelopes, wildebeests, and more birds than you can keep track of. Elephant-back safaris are offered at the park, as well as the more traditional walking and driving safaris, and accommodations range from basic campsites to luxury safari lodges, with prices to suit every budget.

Northern Kruger Park has begun drawing safari lovers in the know. Here, in the shrubby mopaneveld, sand forest, and dense tropical



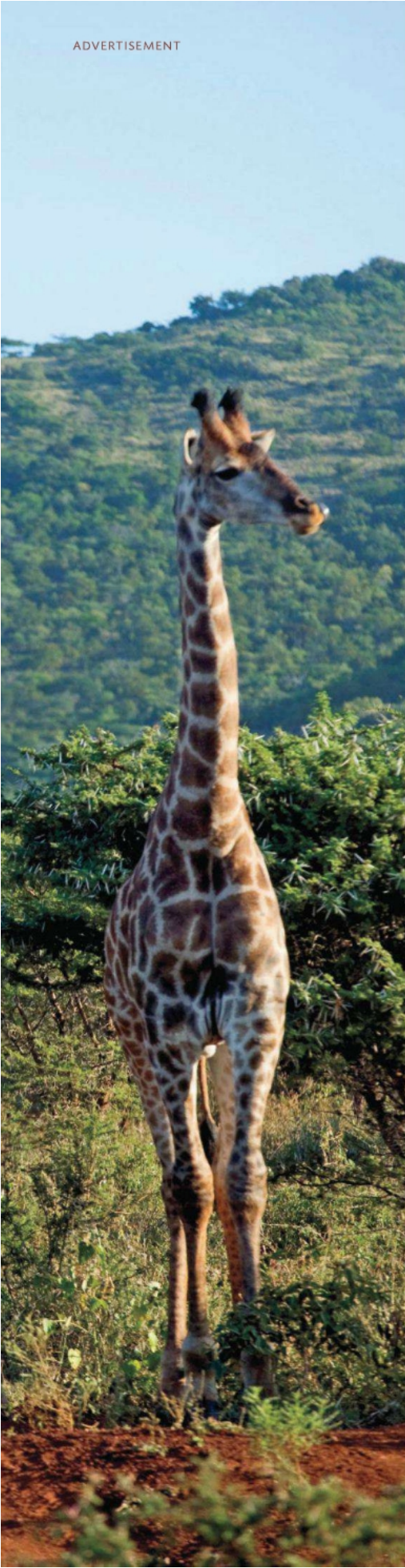
Resting leopard in Sabi Sand Reserve

forests, you’ll find great herds of elephants and buffalo, plus rare antelope species. Because there are far fewer lodges, and safari vehicles are relatively new to the area, the animals here are a bit more reclusive, but great animal sightings are always a possibility.

PRIVATE RESERVES

If you’re prepared to spend a little (or a lot) more, South Africa also has many private game reserves and upscale lodges. These conservation areas offer a higher level of luxury and unparalleled guided bush experience while remaining committed to conservation and community. **Sabi Sand Game Reserve**, for one, provides high-end accommodations along Kruger’s southwest border. Though it’s private, few fences separate the reserve from Kruger, meaning that animals traverse the border freely. Other game reserves such as **Balule**, **Timbavati**, **Thornybush**, **Kapama**, and **Shamwari** are located within the **Waterberg** and **Cederberg** municipalities and **Pilansberg National Park**.

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[NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TRAVELER]

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60 BEST OF THE WORLD 2013

From Crimea to Quito, Ravenna to (surprise!) Memphis, 20 wildly diverse places make our wanderlust list for the new year

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By OLIVIA STREN
Photographs by SISSE BRIMBERG
and COTTON COULSON

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Our hats go off to these passionate globe-trotters who are changing the world, one passport stamp at a time

By GEORGE W. STONE

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Behind the lens craft: Presenting the ten winning images—along with the photographers and their stories—of *Traveler's* 24th competition



Casablanca locals climb on rocks at the Hassan II Mosque overlooking the Atlantic Ocean, page 76.

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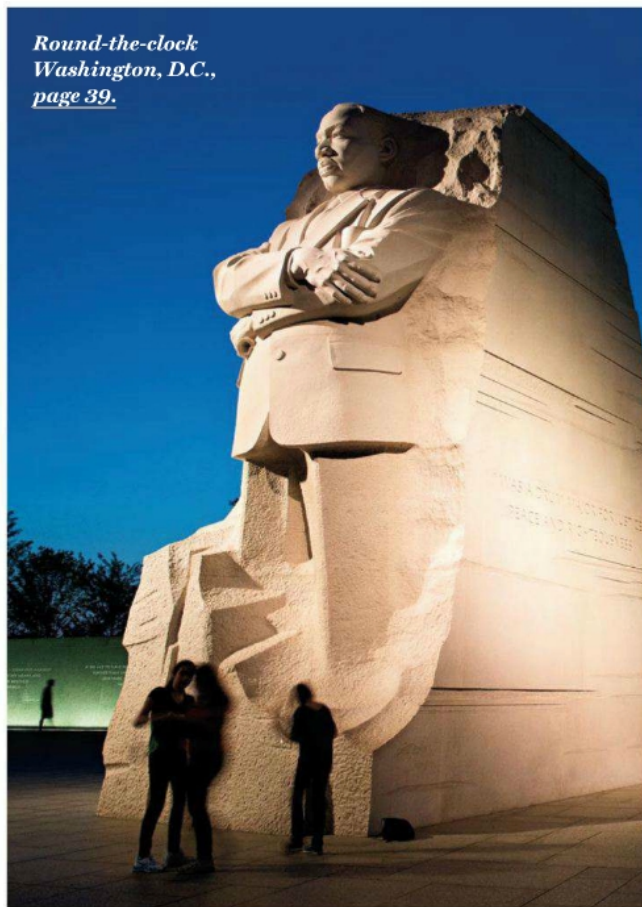
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ON THE COVER: Yalta, Crimea, Ukraine, by FotoS.A./Corbis

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Rocking the boat: Robert Pennicott, a fisherman turned philanthropist, at home in Tasmania.

[EDITOR'S NOTE]

The Envelope, Please

SEVERAL YEARS AGO I was in Tasmania having lunch with Robert Pennicott, a former fisherman who operates Pennicott Wilderness Journeys. We had just come in from a rough ride through the waters of the Tasman Sea, and he was speaking passionately about using some of his profits to preserve Bruny Island and its natural environment—of using tourism as a force for good. Here at *Traveler*, we think Pennicott represents an emerging trend. As the global economy continues to struggle, many of us are traveling with a purpose, with the goal of making a difference in others' lives. To recognize such explorers, in this issue we introduce our first annual "Travelers of the Year" feature (page 86), which celebrates extraordinary people doing remarkable things while traveling, each selected with the help of reader nominations and a blue-chip advisory board (see page 93 for details). It's no surprise that Pennicott made the list—and not because he kept me afloat on the choppy South Pacific. Last year he led the first-ever circumnavigation of Australia by rubber dinghy; in the process, he raised nearly \$300,000 toward eradicating polio. He spends at least a quarter of his net profits on conservation and humanitarian causes.

Among our other honorees are the founder of Walking4Water, who is trekking from South Africa to Egypt to support a nonprofit that delivers fresh water to people in developing nations, and a teacher who invited a Maasai safari guide she had befriended to teach her Colorado students about his way of life. They all have been inspired by travel to give back. In turn, we hope their stories will inspire you to travel for the greater good. We look forward to expanding the program in the coming years—and to getting readers and travelers more involved. Who knows? Maybe next year I'll be writing about you. —KEITH BELLOWS

[FOREIGN DESK]

BOMBAY DREAMS

This summer the latest international edition of *Traveler* launched in India. We asked our new colleague in Mumbai, Editor in Chief Niloufer Venkatraman, to share a few surprises about her native city and country.

A MOVABLE FEAST

Winter is perfect for exploring Mumbai's lanes and alleys, and, when I can, I like to wander and experience real life in the back streets. At night you must visit the street food stalls of Mohammed Ali Road in the Minara Masjid area. Even if you eat nothing, the kebabs, desserts, and crowds offer a fantastic slice of local life.

BAZAAR BEHAVIOR

Lalbag's *masala galli* (spice lane)—particularly near the spice-pounding machines—is a sensory adventure. Watch from a safe distance: The air is so thick with the aroma of spice blends, it's difficult to breathe. It's worth rising at dawn to discover the Dadar flower market's mountains of marigolds, jasmine, roses, gladiolus—and the cacophony of an Indian bazaar.



SPIRITUAL ASCENT

A favorite quick escape is a hike in the Western Ghats, a range of low, rugged hills across the west coast of India that recently was designated a World Heritage site. Most of its ancient rock-cut caves and historic forts can be reached only on foot. For a longer break, nothing beats the Himalaya. From the lower hills of the Kumaon to the high mountains of Ladakh and Spiti [above], the landscapes and cultural richness are a true spiritual experience.



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Seeing Both Sides

A PHOTO OF ST. PETERSBURG'S Church of the Resurrection of Christ, which appeared in "From Russia With Love" (October 2012, above), caught the eye of Thomas Rauch of Grosse Pointe, Mich. "I think the picture of the church was transposed," he noted. "My photos show the reverse orientation." A quick image search seemed to support Rauch's claim, but our photo editors were confident there hadn't been a mix-up. Intrigued, our researchers dug deeper and unearthed a couple of illuminating details: Our photo shows the main entrance, which looks much the same as its back and, against tradition, faces north. Typically, Orthodox churches welcome visitors on the west, but the

architect had wanted to honor the spot where Emperor Alexander II was assassinated (hence the landmark's other name, Church of the Savior on Spilled Blood).

SLICE OF LIFE When you print an article about deep-dish pizza in Chicago (Local Flavor, August/September 2012), a helping of outcry is inevitable. "Not mentioning Giordano's famous stuffed pizza is a disgrace," wrote Gene Roach of Atlantic City, N.J. "The Boglio brothers came

to Chicago in the '60s and, in 1974, opened Giordano's using their mother's recipe for pizza pie from Torino, Italy."

SMILE TRAIN Costas Christ's column about Bhutan's "Gross National Happiness" model (Tales From the Frontier, October 2012) struck a chord with Ken Thompson of Pittsburgh, Pa. "I appreciated your uncertain stance about Bhutan's policies and its realities," he wrote. "There is a part of the story you may not know—of Nepali Bhutanese refugees.

They are now the largest ethnic group at my psychiatry clinic. Their plight is heart-wrenching. These folks are true travelers, though not by choice. Even after all these years, they pine for Bhutan."

A SHORE THING "Call of the Wild" (August/September 2012), a Minnesota road trip along the North Shore of Lake Superior, sparked nostalgia for former resident Maureen Briggs, now of Montrose, Colo. "Along the lakeshore," she advised, "newcomers should watch for several waterfalls that are brown with white foam—aka Minnesota's legendary 'root beer' falls, which get their coloring from tannins seeping into the water from the forest trees."

FEAR FACTOR In "What Am I Doing Here?" (October 2012), Andrew McCarthy wrote about facing his fears through travel. The essay resonated with readers: "Like Andrew, my fear comes from within, not the place I'm in or its people," wrote Terry Radecki of Warren, Pa. "His essay gives me the confidence to rise above my doubts."

[READER'S CHOICE]

REFRESHER COURSES

Whether a yoga retreat in India or an afternoon hike through the woods, travel does a body good.

When we asked where you go to feel better, mind or body, the feedback was an instant mood booster:

“

"On a recent three-week trip to Europe with my husband, one of the highlights was swimming in Lake Bled, Slovenia. Bled is a relaxed and quiet town, and we visited an amazing thousand-year-old castle above the lake. It was a perfect place to chill out on a whirlwind tour of Europe."

MARY BECKER
LA MESA, CALIF.



"I could return time and again to the Silver Bank, Dominican Republic—in fact, I'm planning my fourth visit now. There really is nothing like floating in a calm sea while staring into the eye of a humpback whale [above] to remind you of life's mysteries and beauty."

HEATHER RESER
BRISTOL, IND.

"No matter the weather or time of year, visiting my hometown of New York City makes me feel more alive, more satisfied, more excited. Being surrounded by the energy and beauty of the city always renews me."

BARBARA A. PAFUNDI
PALM HARBOR, FLA.

”

NEXT QUESTION: *Where in the world would you most love to travel in 2013?* E-mail travel_talk@ngs.org.



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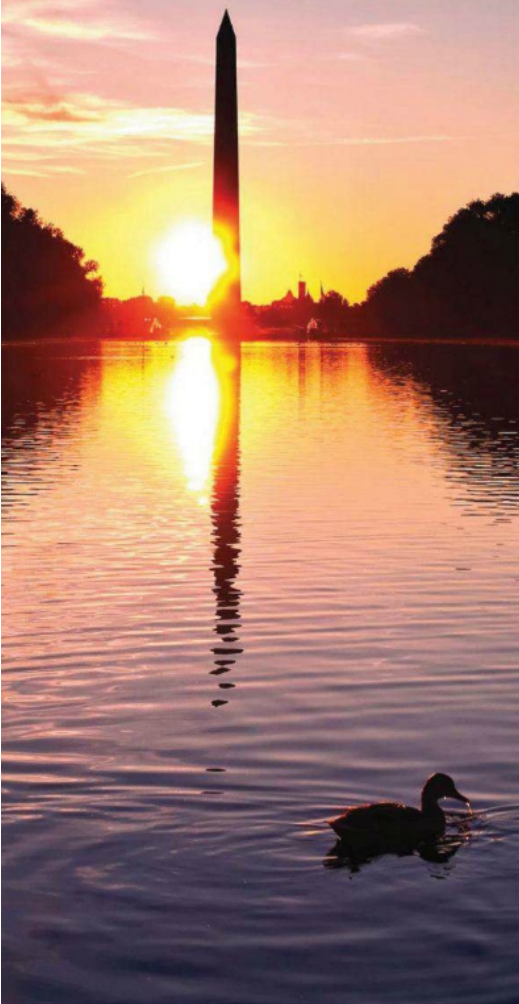
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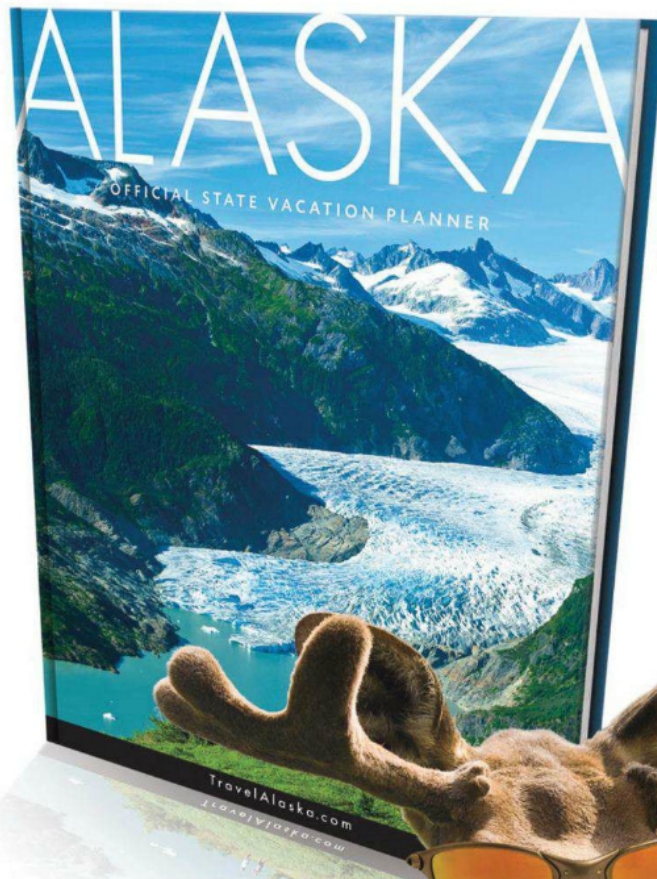
THE TREND

New Water Parks

LESS THAN THREE PERCENT. That's the portion of the world's oceans now set aside for conservation—a small safety net that ecologists are working to increase. Joining a wave of **new marine reserves**, Australia recently designated 382,000 square miles in the Coral Sea to preserve an area of fish-haloed seamounts, turtle nesting areas, and 25 reefs where most commercial fishing and extractive activities will now be prohibited. Snorkelers and ecotourists closer to American shores have welcomed the Caribbean Challenge Initiative, an impressive effort by ten governments with the goal of protecting 20 percent of their coastal shelf by 2020. And California recently established some 1,027 square miles of new marine protected areas, capping off the U.S.'s largest such network. The network will limit habitat destruction in nearly a hundred places like the Farallon Islands and Point Reyes. So where's this current headed? "We'll see the creation of more reserves," says marine ecologist and National Geographic explorer-in-residence Enric Sala. "Governments see that it's good for their image, and communities see that reserves create jobs and raise more revenue than overfishing." —RHETT REGISTER

Kelp help: A push to protect marine resources will help preserve California's reefs.

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THE ROUTE

Grimm Reaping

CALLING ANYONE WHO HAS EVER DAYDREAMED about bread crumb trails: Hansel and Gretel wannabes need look no farther than Germany's **Märchenstrasse**, a 370-mile route snaking through the forests and valleys of the central Hessen region that inspired the Grimm brothers, who first published their famous tales 200 years ago this December. On this "Fairy-Tale Road" north of Frankfurt, travelers choose their own endings at storybook villages such as the Pied Piper's Hameln and at Knallhütte tavern, where the librarian brothers compiled lore at the hearth of an elderly storyteller. But fairy tales have no real sense of time or place, says Burkhard Kling of the Brothers Grimm House in Steinau, so purists shouldn't expect to decipher precise settings. What visitors can seek: Cinderella's Polle castle ruins glow like the heroine's gown; guests can sleep in a four-poster bed in Sleeping Beauty's turret in Sababurg. As in any Grimm tale, the plot thickens at every turn: Hikers can trace Snow White's escape route past spindly trees, and these days cyclists thread Knüll forest, the lair of the big bad wolf. —KAYT SUKEL

*Along Germany's
Grimm trail,
gnarled forests
envelop half-
timbered villages
such as Münden.*

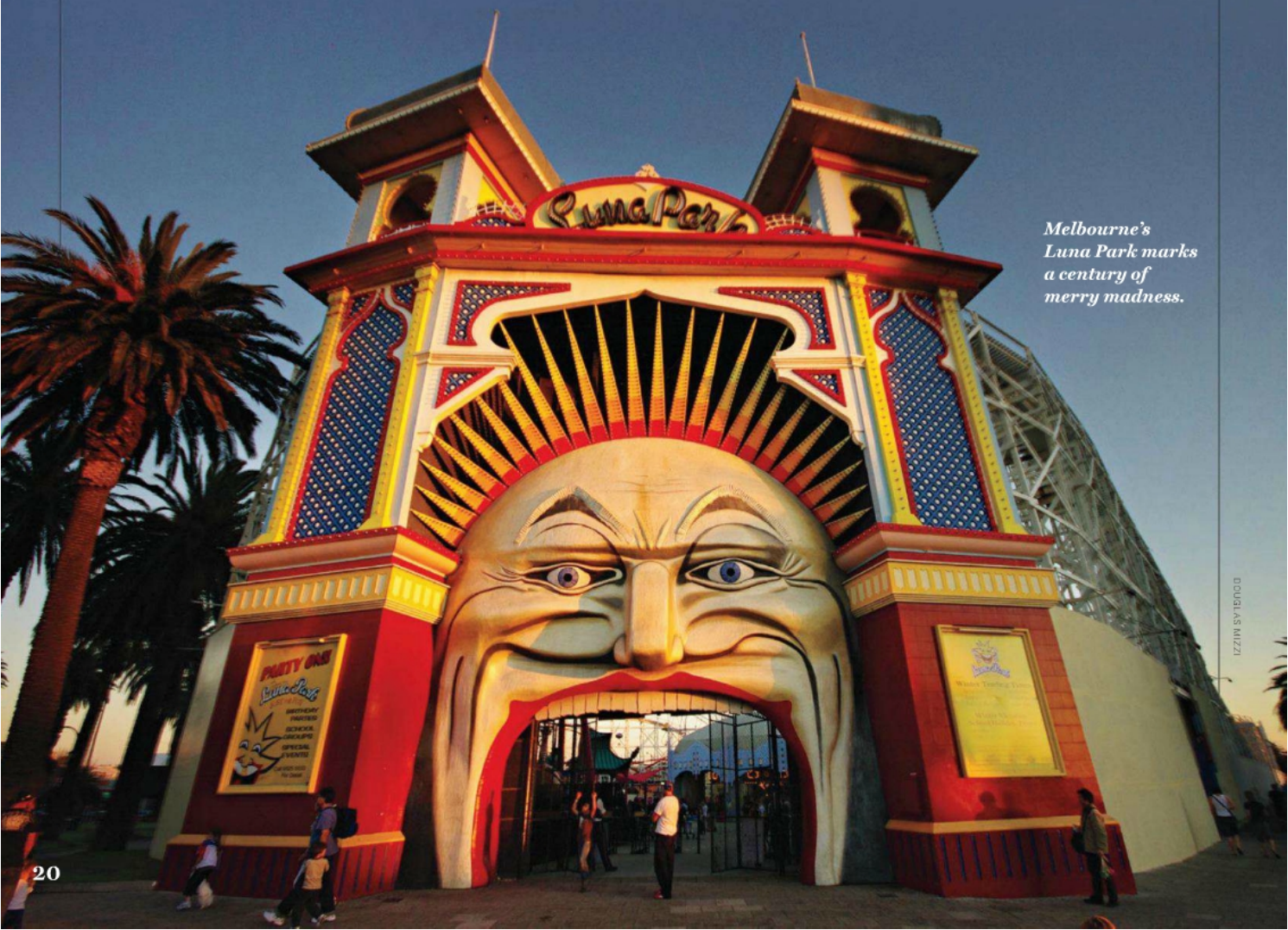


THE MILESTONE

Over the Moon

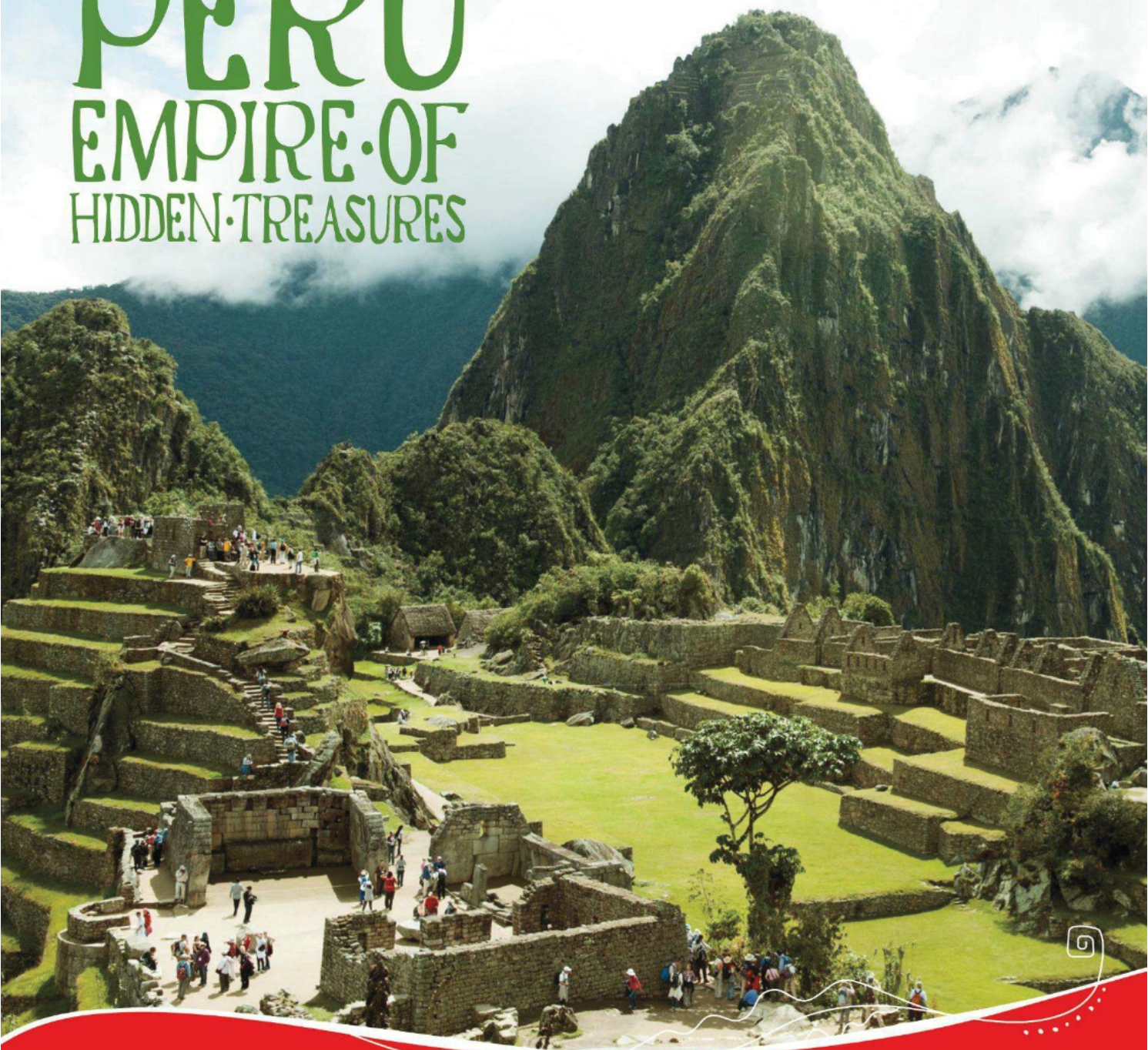
CONEY ISLAND'S LUNA PARK isn't an only child. It has two Australian siblings still operating today—one in Sydney, another in Melbourne. On December 13, Melbourne's **Luna Park turns 100**. Opened in St. Kilda, an affluent area in the Edwardian and Victorian eras, the seaside amusement center was modeled on Brooklyn's whimsical playground. The park originally focused on entertaining adults—it was popular during the Second World War with local soldiers seeking one last wild night before being shipped out—but it shifted in the seventies to become the family-friendly folly it remains today. The landmark continues to usher visitors through the gaping mouth of Mr. Moon and onto the Scenic Railway, the world's oldest continuously operating roller coaster, which opened with the park in 1912. Executive Director Mary Stuart has the kind of long-standing history with the place that resonates with locals: "I remember coming to Luna Park as a girl, but my first memory isn't a beautiful one—I threw up after going on the Rotor!" Centennial celebrations will culminate in December. But even if you're late to that party, the park's glimmering carousel and Amazing Mirror Maze promise that timeless thrills will carry on into a second century. —RACHEL FRIEDMAN

Melbourne's Luna Park marks a century of merry madness.



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THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Richmond's Wrinkle in Time

THE SESQUICENTENNIAL of the Civil War casts a bright light on the one-time capital of the Confederacy, but Richmond today looks nothing like the decimated city in Steven Spielberg's *Lincoln*, filmed here. Explore Richmond's history and culture by visiting **Carytown**. Begin your explorations along Monument Avenue, a grand boulevard lined by trees and punctuated by statuary; walk and discover the city's mix of old and new.

1 Virginia Historical Society Founded in 1831, this gem has risen from regional center to national stature thanks to its collection of artifacts from colonial days to the present. You can watch conservators at work on the massive memorial murals, "The Four Seasons of the Confederacy."

2 Virginia Museum of Fine Arts In the heart of the city's Museum District, the VMFA recently underwent a \$150 million expansion. Its famous Fabergé collection is on international tour, but its gallery of Tiffany glass will delight, particularly in juxtaposition with this winter's major exhibition of Chihuly sculpture. At the museum's restaurant, Amuse,

look for such seasonal dishes as Rappahannock curry fried oysters.

3 Byrd Theatre The national historic landmark leads off a vibrant, eight-block stretch of West Cary Street lined with shops and restaurants. Built in 1928, the Byrd is open 365 days a year for second-run

and classic films, festivals, and Saturday night concerts featuring its Wurlitzer organ. "It's easy to get caught up in the ornate decor," says general manager Todd Schall-Vess, "but this isn't a museum. This theater is still doing what it did 84 years ago."

4 World of Mirth "Look at this!" is what you'll say as you wander through a toy store that stocks an anything-but-the-kitchen-sink array of fun gifts and playthings. Cases in point: bandages that look like bacon, pool floats made to look like glazed doughnuts.

5 Chop Suey Books This funky, two-story bookstore has a mantra of "gently used," but there's a smattering of new, too, with a focus on art, photography, design, food, local Richmond lore, and "Virginiana."



World of Mirth

6 Bohland & Graham Owner Liz Ughetta says her popular shop's blend of modern, traditional, and whimsical proves that "an eclectic assortment of objects can work in a traditional setting." Her home decor offerings range from Georgian chests to 18th-century Scottish grandfather clocks to 1930s medical instruments and industrial-era decorative pieces.

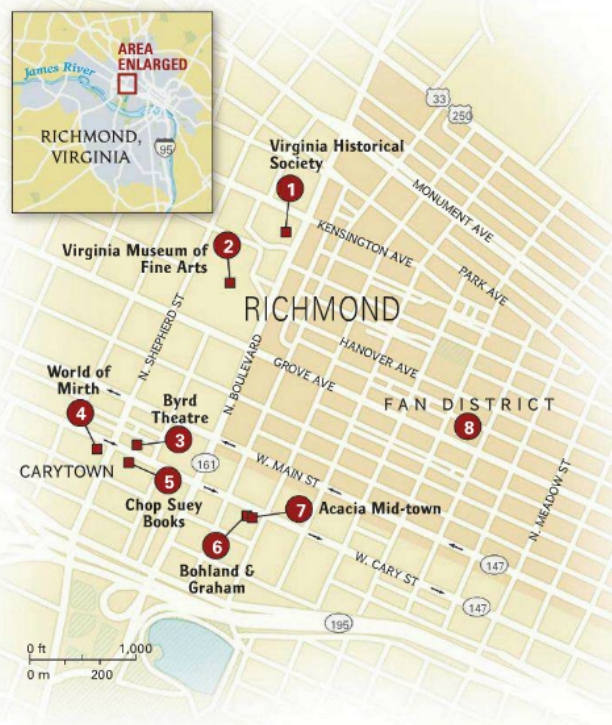
7 Acacia Mid-town Sleek design sets a sophisticated scene for chef Dale Reitzer's creative southern fare anchored on local seafood (the owner drives soft-shell crabs back from his favorite source on the coast). Acacia has a \$25 prix fixe, three-course dinner that makes for a budget-friendly culinary thrill.



Acacia

8 Fan District Named for the fan-shaped layout of its streets, this picturesque, cozy neighborhood of century-old town houses, many artfully restored over the years, is the perfect setting for a stroll.

—Randy Johnson



Virginia Museum of Fine Arts



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In the Palestinian city of Bethlehem, the grotto beneath the Church of the Nativity is revered as the believed birthplace of Jesus.



THE PLACE

Hark! The Heritage Angle

CONSIDER IT AN EARLY HOLIDAY GIFT FOR **Bethlehem:** The Church of the Nativity has achieved World Heritage status. After decades of dispute, the news signals glad tidings for at least one group—preservationists. Dating to 339 over the site of the believed birthplace of Jesus, the mosaic-floored church also landed on the World Heritage in Danger list, the neglect of its leaky roof a testament to its position at the crossroads of West Bank strife. Six miles south of Jerusalem, Bethlehem's twisting streets are hemmed by razor wire and entered through Israeli checkpoints. Yet travelers can move freely along the area's pilgrimage route, which also includes Shepherds' Field, where the Bible says angels extolled the babe's birth. Armenian, Greek Orthodox, and Roman Catholic communities share the sacred grotto for incense-wreathed services. At Manger Square, a Christmas tree towers near a mosque (the city is now mostly Muslim), and shops sell biblical olive woodcarvings, says Suzan Sahori of the Bethlehem Fair Trade Artisans. "For centuries, woodcarvers have offered a bit of holiness to take home." —LORI ERICKSON

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THE NUMBERS

Belle of the Balls

WITH A million or so revelers gathered to cheer its drop this New Year's Eve, New York City's Times Square Ball will pulse with **32,256** LEDs (light-emitting diodes), burning roughly the energy of just two conventional home ovens cranked to full blast for one hour. The ball boasts other impressive digits, too:

One billion-plus people around the world watch the telecast each year.

16 million hues shine from inside its geodesic aluminum frame, which measures **12 feet** across and weighs nearly **six tons**. The pole it descends is **130 feet** tall.

2,688 Waterford crystal triangles adorn the ball (above), engraved with inspirational images such as people holding hands.

179 years ago, the tradition of "time balls" began atop the Royal Observatory in Greenwich, England, helping sailors set their chronometers.

Two wartime "dim-outs" idled the ball in 1942 and '43, when chimes clanged at midnight instead.

Seven balls have dropped since the 1907 original, including one covered in rhinestones and a "Big Apple" ball with red bulbs and a stem.

—Rhett Register

THE IDEA

Homeward Bound

AFTER NEARLY A CENTURY ABROAD, Machu Picchu's treasures are going home. By the end of 2012, Yale University is repatriating to Peru all of the 40,000 artifacts and fragments excavated by professor (and National Geographic explorer) Hiram Bingham in the early 1900s. The collection of Machu Picchu **treasures will return** to Cusco, once the capital of the Inca Empire, and will be housed and exhibited for the public in the Museo Casa Concha, an Inca palace turned colonial mansion near the city's main square, the Plaza de Armas.

Yale's decision keeps pace with a trend to restore contested antiquities to their places of origin. "It's returning to the family, you could say," says Richard Burger, curator of South American archaeology at Yale's Peabody Museum, who is overseeing the transfer. About 360 ceramic, gold, and stone objects are already on display in Casa Concha. While travelers pause in Cusco before embarking on the Inca Trail, they can visit Casa Concha to see a diorama that depicts one of Bingham's Machu Picchu excavations and study pottery jars painted with Incan geometric symbols, a silver plumb bob that was likely used in astronomical observations, and a nearly complete skeleton uncovered at Machu Picchu. —KAREN CARMICHAEL



Cusco's Museo Casa Concha will soon house artifacts headed back to Peru, including a bronze crescent pendant with curling waves (top right), uncovered at Machu Picchu (above).



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DAISANN McLANE

Getting Off on the Wrong Foot

EVERYONE IN the dining hall of the Amazon riverboat is staring at me. Actually, not staring, glaring. At first, I shrug it off. After all, I'm the lone non-Brazilian among the hundred or so passengers riding the slow wooden boat down the Amazon River. I've been trying my best to blend in. I even pitched my hammock on the crowded deck with everyone else to later sleep, shoulder to shoulder, under the equatorial stars. ¶ But still I stick out. So I smile and nod as I seat myself at the communal dining table in front of my tin-plate meal of rice and beans—the modest repast that is included in my \$60 ticket for the thousand-mile journey. I figure if I acknowledge, in a good-natured

way, that all eyes are on me, everybody will stop looking at me and go back to the more important business of eating lunch. Right?

Wrong. “*Senhora, senhora!*” A wiry man wearing an undershirt is shouting and pointing at me. I can’t understand what he is trying to tell me. Another woman takes up the “*Senhora!*” chorus, and another, and they are all making the same odd gesture—patting a hand in the air next to their heads. My face flushes in embarrassment; I’m in a sea of disapproving strangers. What have I done to so upset my fellow passengers?

Suddenly, I feel a breeze whoosh over my head as the baseball cap I’d donned for protection from the harsh Amazonian sun lifts. I turn around, startled, to find it in the hand of the first mate. In his torrent of words, I understand three: *comer não chapéu*—eat no hat.

Then I get it. On a rickety slow boat on the Amazon it’s okay to eat lunch in your undershirt. And without shoes, even. But under no circumstances can you tuck into your beans in Brazil without taking off your hat. I make a mental note of this important rule and add it to that ever lengthening list: My Travel Faux Pas.

Really, I try very hard not to make them. I want the people I meet on the road to focus on me, not on my habits and behaviors. Before I go anywhere, whether to another state or another country, I carefully research the local dos and don’ts. Yet I still stumble.

A guidebook says, “At Caribbean parties, it’s polite to arrive late.”

So I turn up an hour past the invitation time only to find my island hostess still marinating the chicken we’ll be eating two hours later—when the party actually starts. “A kiss on the cheek is the normal greeting in Paris.” Yes, but how many—one, two, three? I constantly misfire on the cheek-peck order; you can tell I’ve been to France by the bruises on my nose.

Embarrassing, culturally clumsy behavior has been a pitfall for travelers since people started leaving home. The French are the ones who have gifted us with the elegant phrase that describes it. Louis XIV, their Sun King, held lavish balls and was a fanatic about dance—so much so that he would banish from his court anyone who made a faux pas, or “false step.” For us travelers, the consequence of putting a foot “falsely,” or wrong, may not be as terrible as in the 17th century, but surely it is no less distressing.

I still blanch when I think of my linguistic whoppers. Foreign languages are one of the areas where it’s almost a given your foot will not just take a mistaken step—it will land in your mouth. I’ve never studied French, so I surf my way through the francophone world with a combo of Spanish and Italian grammar and food words à la française that I’ve picked up from cookbooks and restaurants. You’d be surprised how well this works. Until it doesn’t. I was on a

roll one day in Corsica, when I stopped in a restaurant. “*Excusez-moi*,” I said to the maître d’ in my rudimentary French. “May I get a bit of lunch, not a big meal, just... *un petit déjeuner*?” He looked at me as if I were insane. It was only after I’d finished that I realized, with a blush, that I’d asked for breakfast.

For many of us, visiting Japan is like competing in the faux pas Olympics: Local customs are so nuanced and so specific that you are sure to trip up. I’ve studied and trained for my visits there; by the time I arrive, I could pass an exam in proper bathing technique.

On one trip, I settled myself into my *ryokan* (inn) and expertly followed the elaborate footwear routine required of



In Japan, wear toilet slippers only in bathrooms.

guests. At the door, I would abandon my shoes for house slippers. Later, when the need arose, I would diligently change these for special toilet slippers the Japanese use when they need to step on the (presumably dirty) bathroom floor. No faux pas here: nothing but correct steps for me! With a flourish, I would slide my feet expertly in and out of slippers without pausing—except to note how cutesy my Japanese toilet slippers were, with their red vinyl uppers emblazoned with pink kitties and the word “Toilet.”

Two days, three days of this, and I was feeling the traveler’s pride of having conquered the Everest of etiquette, when I passed a pair of fellow guests walking down the ryokan hallway. The Japanese women looked at me, then looked away uncomfortably. What was wrong? Puzzled, I glanced down at my feet. Two shocking pink kitties smiled up at me.

Then the women began to giggle. And so did I. We all knew my traveler’s feet were faux pas—literally in the wrong place. But they understood my heart was not. ■

DAISANN McLANE divides her time between New York and Hong Kong. Follow her on Twitter, @Daisann_McLane.

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DURBAN: UNIQUE URBAN LIFESTYLE



Basking on the sandy beaches of Durban's Golden Mile, soaking up the sun to the hypnotic rhythms of the waves is what most people expect from their visit to Durban. After all, it's what Durban is famous for. But a pleasant surprise awaits when you tear yourself away from your luxurious hotel resort to explore and experience the urban side of Durban.



Step out into the colorful sunlit streets and soak up the sounds of a city at work and play. A stroll down the beachfront promenade with its joggers and trendy coffee shops sets you up for some serious retail therapy: Durban's famous malls are a shopaholic's paradise. The Musgrave Centre lures lovers of limited edition fashion; the Workshop Shopping Centre has an exciting mix of African, Indian, and European stores; La Lucia Mall boasts exclusive elite shopping. And then there's Durban's big three: The Pavilion has 230 of the funkiest stores around; the Galleria combines retail giants with exclusive boutiques; and then there's Gateway—Durban's mega mall where world-class shopping meets urban entertainment. Four-hundred stores, arcades, bowling, an Imax cinema, climbing wall, wave pool, 4x4 adventure course, and a skate park designed by skateboarding legend Tony Hawk—it all adds up to the ultimate urban cool.

Lunchtime means al fresco dining Durban style. Enjoy a leisurely lunch on the seafront or a snack in a street-side cafe. Alternatively grab a traditional *bunny chow* for great food on the go. In the afternoon you could pamper yourself in a luxury spa or head over to the Bat Centre to watch local artisans create original objets d'art and perhaps pick up a unique gift. Durban has a growing reputation for world-class design so indulge yourself by browsing

our many boutique stores, or visit the vibrant township markets for a splash of colorful culture. A harbor cruise is a great way to see the city's impressive skyline or simply while away the afternoon enjoying harbor views from one of Wilsons Wharf's waterside restaurants.

For sundowners the beachfront bars beckon with hip music and cooling sea breezes. With the clink of ice and rhythmic rattle of the shaker, Joe Cool's serves up unique Durbs cocktails, while on Ushaka Pier Moyo's 360-degree beachfront, views come with surround-sound sea! At Wilson's Wharf your drinks are served to the sights and sounds of this trendy marina, or head up to Gino's Sky Bar to see the sun go down from the 33rd floor. You could then slip downstairs for a unique panoramic dining experience in the fashionable Roma revolving restaurant.





Images counterclockwise from top left: luxury yachts at the Durban marina and Wilson's Wharf; innovative fashion at the Durban July—Africa's premier horseracing event; beach dining on the Golden Mile; unique couture by local designers; sophisticated shopping at the Pavilion; magnificent view from the Sky Bar at the Roma revolving restaurant

DURBAN
THE WARMEST PLACE TO BE

Indeed fine dining in Durban means being spoiled for choice. Whether you want hushed sophistication, cheerful chatter, or vibrant live music with your meal we've many award-winning restaurants and a full range of international cuisine to choose from—all accompanied by as fine a selection of wines as you could wish for. Of course, seafood is our specialty and you can expect to taste some of the world's best prawns and calamari—but be sure to try a traditional Indian curry too.

Durban's nightlife has something for everyone and lets you throw caution to the wind as you party along to our laid-back vibe. The applause erupting from our theaters could be for anything from world-class opera to riotous comedy or quirky cabaret. The chink of the chips at both the Suncoast Casino and Sibaya Casino means more

than luck at the gaming tables with seriously stylish bars, restaurants, nightclubs, music, and shows all under one roof. Whatever beat you dance to we have live music and clubbing for every groove along with plenty of sophisticated bars for a quiet drink in good company. Florida Road attracts the young and trendy; Marine Parade has everything from cosmopolitan cocktail lounges to fun sports pubs; and the city's eclectic mix of nightclubs will carry you through until the pull of a final nightcap rounds off your day of exploring urban Durban.

Find out more about Durban by visiting www.durbanexperience.co.za



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Scan the QR code to watch *Sounds of Durban*, a short film shot on location in Durban by National Geographic Channel.



BOYD MATSON

Like a Fish out of Water

IT'S 8 A.M.—A BIT LATE for “real” fly fishermen to be starting the day, but we’re on vacation. More to the point, we’re not real fly fishermen. My wife, Betty, claims some experience fishing for crabs with a string and chicken necks as a kid in Georgia, and I spent many hours in my youth with a rod and reel casting for bass on small lakes in Texas. But both of our “skills” share only the word “fishing” with what we will be doing this morning on the Middle Provo River near Park City, Utah. It’s the equivalent of having prepared for a debut concert at Carnegie Hall with one night of intoxicated karaoke singing. ¶ Although Betty has never been fly-fishing, she has seen the 1992 movie *A River Runs Through It*.

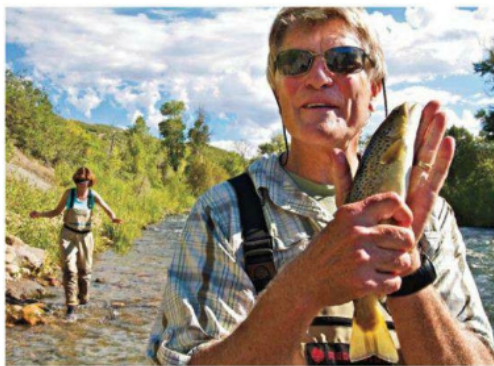
When she so readily agrees to try the sport, I can’t help but speculate she must have assumed we will encounter a young Brad Pitt on the river. We don’t, but we do find Hunter Shotwell, our fishing guide. Like Brad’s character in the movie, he is young, charming, and knows everything there is to know about fly-fishing. He says he’s been fishing seriously since he was eight. He also informs us that it’s “just a short walk—maybe 15 or 20 minutes” from our parking space to a “really good spot for catching trout.” And with those words, on an otherwise perfect morning of windless, cloudless, sunny blue skies, I sense the potential for a storm.

My wife’s idea of a hike is the walk from the parking garage to her office. She sees no need to cover terrain that can’t be negotiated in dress-for-success shoes. Most of all, she gets no palpable endorphin rush from any activity associated with the phrase “working up a good sweat.” As she is quick to tell me, “It’s not that I can’t do it, it’s that I don’t want to do it.” She’s also quick to point out that her joints remain spry—unlike those of exercise-loving me, whose orthopedist is on speed dial.

In the name of adventure, I’ve been willing to take some risks that reasonable people might consider ill-advised. But when I see the first beads of perspiration forming on my wife’s brow, I worry I might have stepped over the line into a realm of consequences even I’m not willing to accept. Remembering the plaque she bought for

our house that says, “If mamma ain’t happy, ain’t nobody happy,” I reach back and take her hand and lead her over rocks and through small streams pocked with unseen holes. I’m determined to get to our fishing spot without anyone falling, and as quickly as possible. I’m betting that if she can just get a trout on the end of a line, all the effort of getting here will be forgotten, and the day—and the beginning of our vacation—will be considered a success.

This whole trip is a bit of an experiment: Let’s try something we haven’t done before and see what happens. The adventure began at a charity auction. To help start the bidding, we put our names down for a weeklong trip to Park City, Utah. No one else bid. We arrive out West having given no thought to how we will spend the next seven days. We only know that any seriously strenuous activities will fall late in the week, after Betty has returned to work. The Park City area, in the Wasatch mountains, is populated by outfitters for every type of activity a traveler’s heart might desire—hiking, climbing, rafting, biking, caving, historical tours, spa treatments, and, of course, fly-fishing. Rather than shopping around, we decide we’ll let one small company do all the planning for us. All we have to do is tell the company a number of days—and that one of us has a no-sweating rule while the other needs some adventure. It’s someone else’s problem to solve that jigsaw puzzle.



Reel life: the author and his wife in Utah.

The outfitter’s plans for us range from a concert by the famed Mormon Tabernacle Choir to a visit to Antelope Island in the Great Salt Lake. Yet the success of this whole “and now for something completely different” vacation seems to ride on day one’s excursion—a fact I’m painfully aware of by the time we finally reach Hunter’s special fishing hole on the Middle Provo. He immediately relieves some of my anxiety by explaining that we won’t be trying to duplicate the highly skilled style of fly-casting made famous in the movie. Instead we will be trying a technique called “chuck and duck.” Lucky

for us, there are no points for form; all we have to do is heave the line upriver, let it float past, and heave it again. Much to my surprise, it works, and within 15 minutes I’ve caught a couple of trout. And much to my relief, Betty has soon caught a nice-size fish, too. We catch and release several more as the morning goes on, but most important we are smiling and enjoying the outdoors in a gorgeous setting while doing something we have never done before, together.

Later, two guys making artful casts about 50 yards downriver—clearly they’re real fly fishermen—yell that they haven’t caught anything, wondering if we’re having any luck. That’s when I know the real secret to our success: finding Hunter. He’s the one picking the right flies, tying them, untangling our lines, and telling us where to chuck and duck. Sometimes not having a plan works—if you can find the right person to make the plans for you. As we hike back, I know it’s going to be a great vacation when Betty doesn’t mention how far we are walking, or the rough terrain, or the drops of sweat. Instead she’s talking about the ones that didn’t get away. ■

BOYD MATSON hosts National Geographic Weekend on the radio.

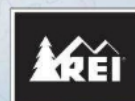


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CHRISTOPHER ELLIOTT

A Tale of Two Airlines

IN TRAVEL, AS IN LIFE, there are heroes and villains. There's good and evil. And there's Southwest Airlines and Spirit Airlines. ¶ Both are no-frills discount carriers, and both are success stories in the economic sense. But that's where the similarities end. ¶ Spirit is known for its preponderance of fees, the risqué tone of some of its ads (as in the naughty "MILF" acronym for its "Many Islands, Low Fares" sale), and a take-it-or-leave-it attitude toward customer service. Southwest has a reputation for inclusive fares (one of the few airlines left that don't charge extra for a checked bag), a Texas-style hospitality (concerts on planes), and its famous customer-focused way. ¶ A look at these airlines offers a

window into the relationship between air carriers and their customers, revealing why the modern flying experience can be so infuriating.

For Southwest—the Dallas carrier founded in 1971—customer service is part of its corporate DNA. Consider what happened to Robert Siegel. The retired engineer and his wife, Ruth, were scheduled to fly from West Palm Beach to Philadelphia when Ruth was diagnosed with lung cancer; her doctor ordered her to cancel the trip. Even though the tickets were nonrefundable, Siegel requested an exception. "Within one week, a complete credit had been posted to my credit card," he says.

Southwest routinely waives its requirements in the interests of "Customer Service." (It also has an annoying habit of uppcasing key words, like "People.") Several years ago, one of its pilots even held the plane for a passenger so that he could make his grandson's funeral. It doesn't punish customers with ticket change fees or price its less restricted tickets so that only business travelers on an expense account can afford them. It's not perfect, of course. Southwest's prices can sometimes be significantly higher than the competition's. And its one-class service is too egalitarian for many business travelers.

Spirit Airlines styles itself as the anti-Southwest. The airline, based in the suburbs of Fort Lauderdale, has its roots in the trucking business, which may explain a lot: Its customers often complain that they

are treated like cargo. Seems Spirit wouldn't have it any other way.

Spirit often does the exact opposite of what Southwest would. When Vietnam vet Jerry Meekins was told his esophageal cancer was terminal and advised by his doctor to cancel his flight from Florida to Atlantic City, the airline refused a refund request. Only after veterans groups intervened did the carrier cave, and only reluctantly. In an effort to not set a precedent, CEO Ben Baldanza said he personally would pay for the refund, not his airline.

And Spirit does love fees. Fully one-third of its ticket revenue comes from fees (compared with 7.5 percent for Southwest). Spirit argues that its passengers just crave low fares, and that all of the extras are optional. But some passengers complain that the fees aren't adequately disclosed and that some are ridiculous (a \$100 charge to carry—that's right, carry—a bag on a plane if you didn't prepay a lower fee online). Where Southwest's employees have a reputation for being sociable, Spirit's can be on the surly side. Baldanza once inadvertently replied directly by e-mail to a passenger this way: "Let him tell the world how bad we are. He's never flown us before anyway and will be back when we save him a penny."

Baldanza has a point, and it's one that drives consumers (and consumer advocates) crazy: If you can navigate the maze of fees, restrictions, and Spirit's \$9 Fare Club (\$60 per year, with automatic reenrollment whether you fly or not), you can travel for impressively low fares. And stockholders love their shares of SAVE (Spirit's ticker symbol) about as much as they do Southwest's (aptly, LUV).

I'd say Spirit enjoys playing the villain as much as Southwest likes being the hero. Spirit certainly hasn't suffered for it financially. These two airlines represent one of travel's most enduring paradoxes: that companies offering poor customer service can succeed as well as those offering good customer service. Spirit's success defies an easy explanation, unless you have a degree in psychology. Spirit taps into the very

human need to snag a deal. But understanding what makes us tick and the way we can be manipulated points to a better future for every traveler. See, Southwest and Spirit are not the only examples of travel's curious yin and yang. Whether you're staying at a hotel, renting a car, or taking a cruise, you've faced the same kinds of choices between companies. At the beginning of 2013, many of these companies find themselves at a crossroads, wondering which path to take: the embrace of a LUV or the thriftiness of a SAVE. Both clearly work in the short term. But a Southwest operates on the principle that, eventually, customers will catch on.

Then again, maybe not. If people continue to fall for the ultralow, lots-of-strings-attached rates, then the treatment of passengers like cargo might continue indefinitely. Travelers must consider more than the price when they book their ticket or make arrangements to take a cruise or rent a car. They have to take a company's service reputation into account, too. Reward the heroes of the travel industry with your business. Otherwise, the villains win. ■



An American Idol concert on a Southwest plane.

CHRISTOPHER ELLIOTT addresses readers' travel problems. E-mail your story to celliott@ngs.org.



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COSTAS CHRIST

*Seeing the World,
According to Me*

SOME PEOPLE LOOK for the pool. Others head for the concierge desk. Me? The very first thing I do when I arrive at a hotel is stand in the lobby and take a visual 360. Can I tell what country I'm in (or even what continent I'm on) from the decor, the staff uniforms, the architecture? If not, I head for the door. I want lodging that embraces a sense of place, not conquers it. The way I travel reflects my values. The reduce-reuse-recycle part of sustainable travel is well-known. But the two other pillars—protection of natural and cultural heritage and support for the well-being of local people—are just as important. I don't mean to imply that

my way is the only way, or the best way. But I do hope it encourages you to consider what effect your travels have on the planet and its people.

Once, in Dakar, I stepped onto a tour bus to see that pulsating West African city. And see it I did. I just didn't experience it. Missing was the possibility of unscripted interaction: stopping to listen to a group of street drummers, exchanging pleasantries with tie-dye-clad women amid towers of exotic fruit at a weekend market, sitting among locals at a café serving *ceebu jën*, Senegal's national dish. So I steer clear of tour buses. Don't get me wrong—there is safety and camaraderie on a tour bus. But if I can explore by foot or bicycle, I always do; it's more meaningful for me, better for the environment, and I can also choose where to spend my dollars to benefit more people away from the tourist hubs.

If you ever see me in a chain hotel, it's because I'm attending a conference or need to be close to the airport. Otherwise, I opt for locally owned inns and guesthouses. Mom-and-pop establishments provide a unique window on the culture and help keep independent businesses from going extinct. I once stayed in a Portuguese pension that turned out to be owned by three generations of cork farmers. They shared stories of harvesting cork bark from trees by hand (an age-old tradition) and making corks for wine bottles.

I want my guide to be a local. It is not a question of whether

a native guide can offer the same information as, say, a Harvard historian delivering a lecture on postcolonial Africa. The latter can share reams of fascinating facts, but it is the homegrown squire who can deliver a lifetime of personal insights on the destination. Plus, hiring locals provides jobs where they are often needed the most. My Kenyan guide took me to meet her 98-year-old grandmother, who prepared sweet milky tea and told me about the first white settlers to arrive in the Mua Hills, where she was born. It was living history—and a priceless encounter with a human being.

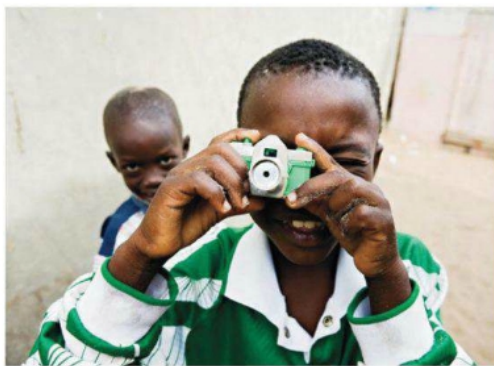
I have written before about the negative impacts of the cruise industry (case in point: A few years ago, developers cut a quarter-mile-wide hole in one of Jamaica's barrier reefs to make room for ever larger megaliners). So you might be surprised to learn that I do cruise. The dividing line for me is big ship vs. small ship. I am firmly in the latter boat (my rule: 200 passengers or fewer). A smaller ship burns less fuel, can resupply locally (fresher food for guests and more economic benefits for the destination), and allows more intimate contact with people and nature (while on a cruise in Borneo last February I spotted a wild orangutan in the jungle).

There is no question that traveling, especially by air, generates harmful carbon dioxide. So I usually purchase carbon offsets (programs that calculate the amount of carbon emitted and offset the emissions by supporting a forest conservation, renewable energy, or similar planet-friendly project). Offsets are handy tools, but they don't replace making my trip as environmentally friendly as possible. I buy carbon offsets only after also taking all possible measures to reduce my negative footprint (like booking an off-the-grid eco-lodge). One reputable offset organization I like is Sustainable Travel International (carbonoffsets.org).

I'm a seafood lover. To avoid accidentally dining on threatened fish stocks, I pull up the Monterey Bay Aquarium's Seafood Watch app on my smartphone.

And I say no to shrimp: Most of it comes from aquaculture ponds bulldozed out of mangroves and dosed with chemicals. If I'm in a place where I can't see the ocean, I scour the menu for local food products—the less food travels to get to your plate, the more nutritious it is and the less fossil fuels are involved. In Ulaanbaatar, I dined on yak cheese and dumplings.

Though I prefer to travel independently, sometimes a tour operator is the better choice—in Papua New Guinea, for instance. Two decades ago, I could count the number of eco-friendly tour companies on one hand. Now they can fill a book—a good thing. But some operators walk the talk better than others. So before I sign on, I check out a company's sustainability cred and ask questions: How do you support the protection of nature, help safeguard cultural traditions, engage in leave-no-trace camping, give priority to hiring local people? If the answers are vague, I move on. I want my hard-earned vacation dollars going to operators as passionate about Earth as I am. What about you? ■



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COSTAS CHRIST writes about the changing world of travel. E-mail him through travel_talk@ngs.org.

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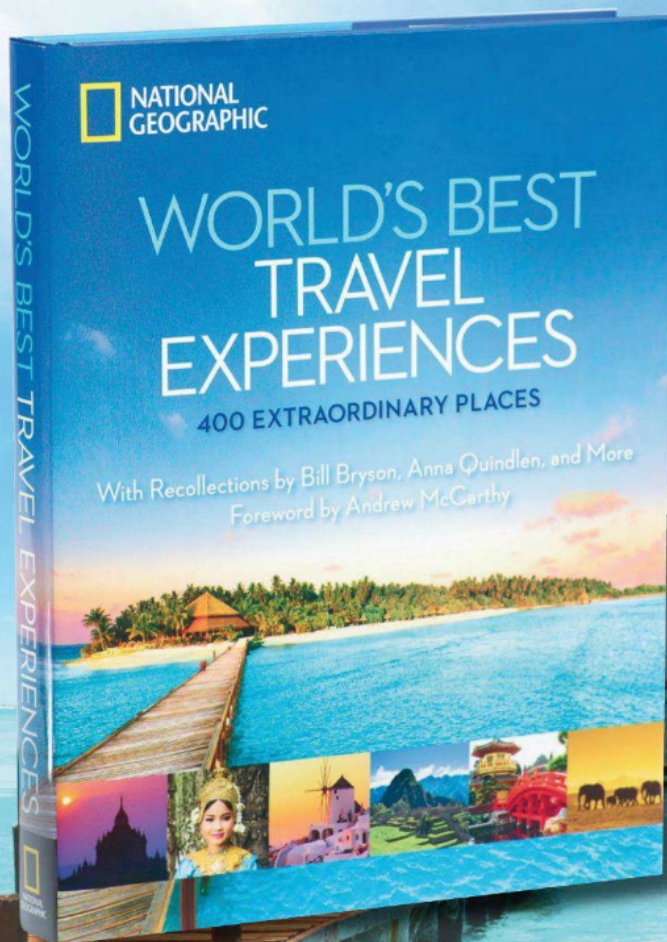
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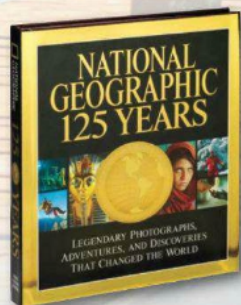
WHAT DEFINES "THE BEST"?

"... the feeling when a place, or a moment, takes our breath away and fills us with that feeling of connection, or that sense of discovery, or rediscovery; feelings of being lost, and then found—these are the experiences I search out while on the road."

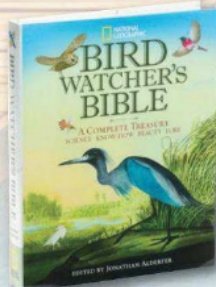
—From the foreword by actor and travel writer Andrew McCarthy



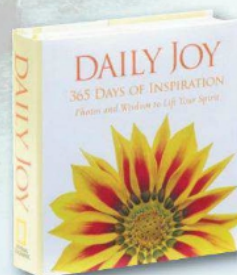
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Illuminated at night, the new Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial punctuates an evening sky on the National Mall.

Monumental Style

A TOUR OF WASHINGTON, D.C., DAZZLES VISITORS YEAR-ROUND

By JENNIFER BARGER

THE DISTRICT OF Columbia's grandeur—the U.S. Capitol, the White House, and the National Mall—gets shown off in a Yankee Doodle dandified way during January's presidential inauguration. And a recent economic and cultural boom—*Forbes* named D.C. the country's second coolest city to live in—means the District is also a prime place to dine, boutique-hop, and sip speakeasy-style cocktails. "Tourists may not realize there are interesting neighborhoods and a really thriving city behind the pomp they see on television," says local writer and performance artist Holly Bass.

DAY ONE

MORNING Breakfast of Insiders

Named for the hostel in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, Dupont Circle's **Tabard Inn**, a cozy restaurant within an inn, fills up with

both deal-making locals and travelers. They dine on house-made bagels and salmon and goat cheese omelets.

Easier to score tickets to than the White House, free tours of the **U.S. Capitol** (tours.visitthecapitol.com) are offered every day except Sundays and holidays. Cheerful, red-jacketed guides steer small groups through the "crypt" level (actually, more of a basement, since no one is buried there), with its dimly lit Old Senate Chamber, where Supreme Court justices heard arguments from 1810 to 1860. But the real drama is upstairs in the Rotunda, where statues of presidents and oil paintings of early explorers compete with the iron dome's fresco.

AFTERNOON Museum-Hopping

Take D.C.'s easy-to-use Metro system one stop from the Capitol to **Eastern Market**, a lively 19th-century building that hosts

bakers, fishmongers, and the **Market Lunch**, a counter-service café known for its crispy, Old Bay-spiked crab cakes. If you want a more sit-down meal, the nearby clubby **Chesapeake Room** restaurant serves local seafoods and bison burgers and pours brews from Maryland and Virginia (try the Heavy Seas Marzen if it's on tap).

D.C. boasts dozens of museums devoted to everything from Asian art (the **Freer** and **Sackler** galleries) to global espionage (the **International Spy Museum**). Seeing them all in one trip would be like getting a bill through subcommittee. Instead, pick one or two of the Smithsonian Institution's free-to-everyone storehouses, most of them on the National Mall. The **National Museum of American History** shows off the "star-spangled banner," first ladies' inaugural gowns, and TV relics including a Kermit the Frog puppet. **The National Museum of**

the American Indian displays Diné (Navajo) blankets, Ojibwa birchbark baskets, Oglala Sioux beaded moccasins, and other tribal artifacts in a curvy, golden Kasota limestone building.

EVENING *Monuments by Moonlight*

Mintwood Place's menu of creative nibbles (salty, blistered *shishito* peppers; escargot hush puppies) and American mains (cast-iron chicken) put chef Cedric Maupillier's Adams Morgan bistro on the culinary map. President Obama and Michelle dined there with supporters last summer, and the eatery got even hotter. Neighbors jam the weathered wooden booths and the zinc-topped bar for specialty cocktails like the Woodrow Wilson made with Holland *genever*, elderflower, cava, and peppery Hum liqueur.

D.C.'s memorials honor soldiers, presidents, and now, civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. They're edifying by day but electrifying at night, when raven skies set off the mostly white marble monuments. "These places are meant to be solemn, and that quality comes out in the dark," says Carolyn Crouch, founder of **Washington Walks**, which leads tours past sites like the domed Jefferson Memorial, the lesser-known George Mason Memorial, and the Reflecting Pool, which connects the Lincoln Memorial to the National World War II Memorial, and recently underwent a \$34 million face-lift.

DAY TWO

MORNING *Neighborhood Nosh*

Grab brunch in leafy Georgetown at **Puro Café**, a Euro-chic Mediterranean restaurant located in a 19th-century brick town house with a mod interior that includes cherry red chandeliers and abstract art. The menu is totally 21st-century, though: prosciutto-fig flatbread, a diet-busting coconut French toast ladled with butterscotch crème anglaise. After brunch, stroll a few blocks east to **Tudor Place Historic House and Garden**, the stately home built by Martha Washington's granddaughter and her husband in 1816, where more than 100 objects—from dinnerware to furnishings—that belonged to George Washington are on display.

AFTERNOON *Shop Local*

Though much of Georgetown has been colonized by a chain-store gang (J. Crew, Gap, Anthropologie), the cobblestone sidewalks of upper Wisconsin Avenue between P Street and Reservoir Road offer mostly local boutiques. Climb the brick stairs to **Sherman Pickey** for preppy-but-stylish men's and



District must-dos (clockwise from top left): Tour the Rotunda of the U.S. Capitol, sample shishito peppers at Mintwood Place, and amble the streets of Georgetown.

women's clothing including frocks by Milly and polos by Southern Tide. Antiques shops also cluster here, including funky **Darrell Dean Antiques & Decorative Arts**, where you're as likely to land a 1970s metal floor lamp shaped like a robot as a hand-colored fashion print. Stock up on take-home treats at **Fleurir Chocolates**, where the rosebud cardamom bonbons are irresistible.

EVENING *Hipper Sippers*

Craft beer, crafted cocktails, and a crafty approach to mid-Atlantic cuisine are fueling the District's appetite. Find all three

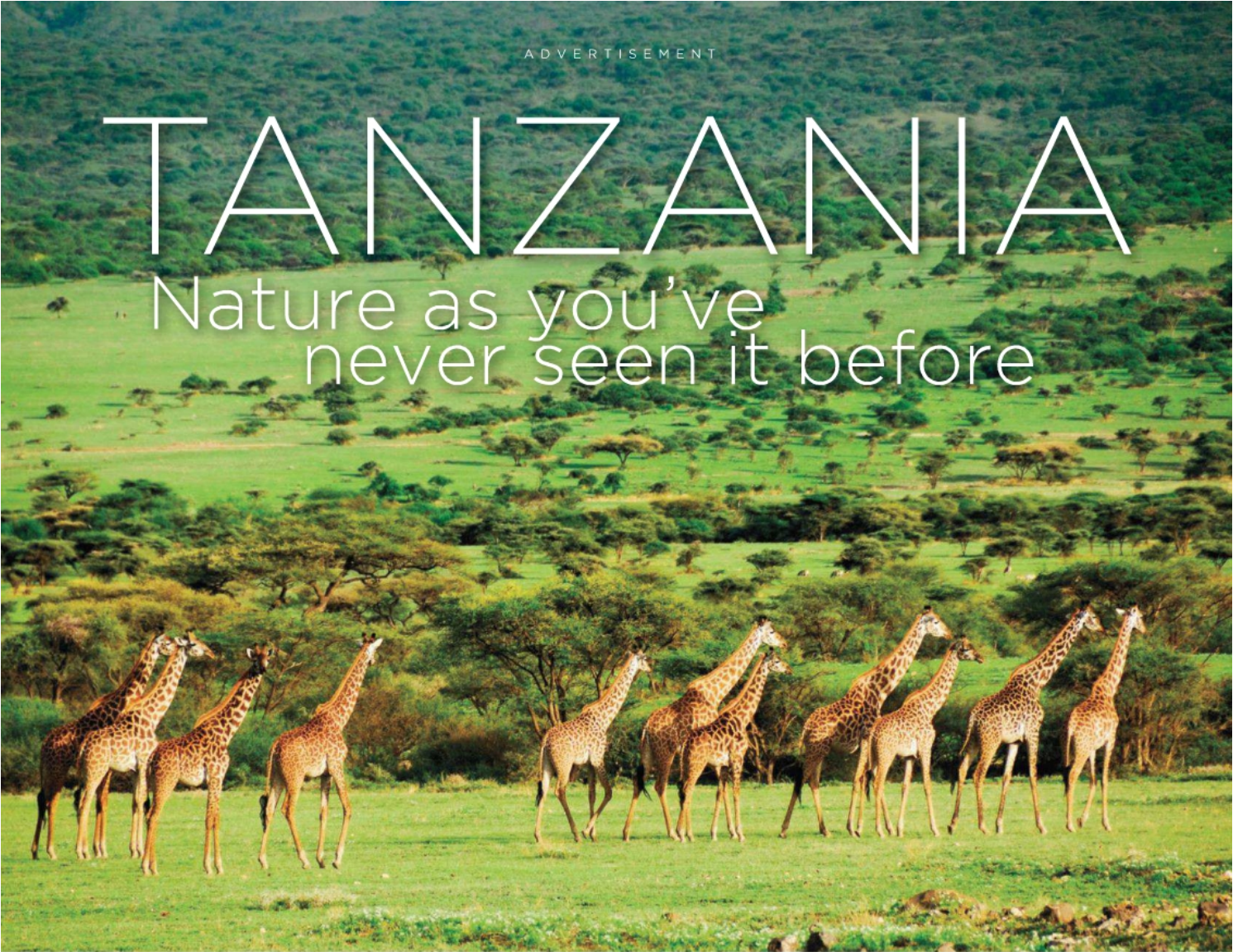
in the booming Logan Circle and U Street neighborhoods. Ale is what cures you off at **ChurchKey**, where a hops-heavy list tops off at 555 beers from around the world. **Pearl Dive Oyster Palace** serves custom-grown Virginia oysters and seafood specialties from the Chesapeake Bay. After dinner, slip into the **Gibson**, a neo-speakeasy where mixologists shake up reinventions of pre-Prohibition cocktails, including the Rickey, a potent gin-based drink invented in D.C. in the 1880s. Originally intended to cool down the heat of summer, the drink also succeeds at adding a warm spark to a winter's night. ■

JUST IN

For sites farther afield (George Washington's home, Mount Vernon, and the Smithsonian's airplane- and spacecraft-filled Udvar-Hazy Center), rent one of newcomer **Car2go's** Smart cars (www.car2go.com). The exhibit "Food: Transforming America's Table, 1950-2000" at the **American History Museum** dishes up exhibits on modern cooking and eating lore via displays on Julia Child's kitchen, U.S. winemaking, and farming innovations.

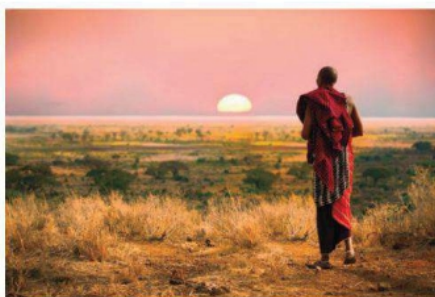
TANZANIA

Nature as you've
never seen it before



Tanzania—land of **Kilimanjaro**, **Zanzibar**, and the **Serengeti**—proudly boasts 15 remarkable national parks filled with exceptional wildlife. The opportunities for travelers here are limitless: walking and ballooning safaris, bird-watching, fishing, rare-game viewing, picnicking in the bush, chimpanzee treks, canoeing, nighttime game-viewing drives, and mountain climbing. Each park's animal life, biodiversity, and scenery make it distinct, and each holds remote gems that will make you want to stay forever—or at least come back again soon.

One of the best ways to see the parks is on safari, with the uncompromised beauty of the land providing a perfect backdrop to a thrilling adventure. No matter where you've been before, Tanzania's spectacular parks—**Kitulo**, **Ruaha**, **Katavi**, **Udzungwa**, **Mahale**, **Gombe**, **Saadani**, **Mikumi**, **Mkomazi**, **Arusha**, **Rubondo Island**, **Lake Manyara**, **Tarangire**, **Mount Kilimanjaro**, and the **Serengeti**—are diverse enough to create an experience that can't be matched. So, whether it's your first or fifth safari, a visit to any one of Tanzania's national parks will be the experience of a lifetime.





SOUTHERN PARKS

Katavi National Park

In this rarely visited treasure, the country's third largest park, you'll have nature to yourself and experience the Africa of days gone by. In the dry season herds of wildlife so large they're beyond imagining concentrate around the Katuma River, and in the rainy season, the park's marshy lakes trill with birdlife and bristle with hippos and crocodiles.

Kitulo National Park

The Serengeti of Flowers, this park's plateau, is a riot of orchids, geraniums, lobelias, lilies, and the brilliant flowers of the red-hot poker plants. Birds, butterflies, lizards, and chameleons add their own rich sights and sounds to what locals call the Garden of the Gods.

Mikumi National Park

Sitting at the heart of a 47,000-square-mile wilderness, this easily accessible park is a game-viewing paradise. Lions rule here, and prey for them is plentiful—zebras, wildebeests, impalas, elands, and hippos. Migrating flocks of birds fill the skies in the rainy season, but in any season, you'll find the animals here as unforgettable as the park itself.

Ruaha National Park

Wildlife and scenery make this new park, the largest in Tanzania, a perfect safari setting. Rivers patrolled by crocodiles splice the park's woodlands and grasslands, home to the great African hoofed animals—including the park's famous greater kudu—and its huge elephant herds.

Udzungwa Mountains National Park

The forest primeval beckons with all its enchantments in Udzungwa. This is the largest and most biodiverse area in the famous chain of mountains known as the Eastern Arc. Hike its sun-dappled trails and you'll revel in the lushness and wildlife, including two kinds of primates—a red colobus monkey and crested mangabey.



WESTERN PARKS

Gombe National Park

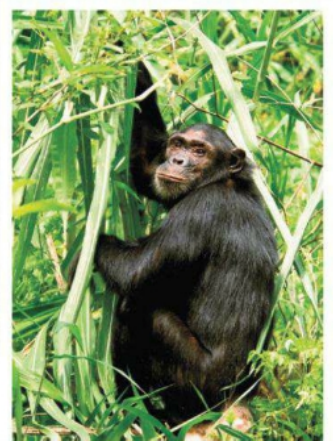
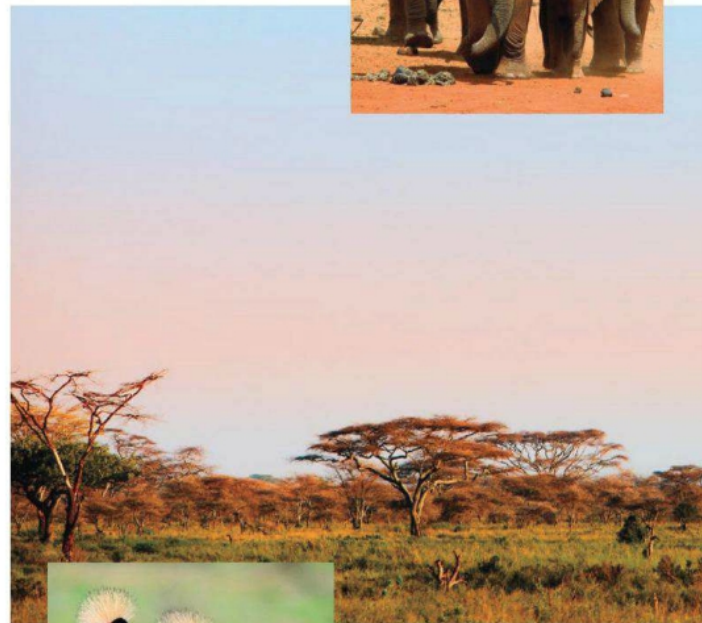
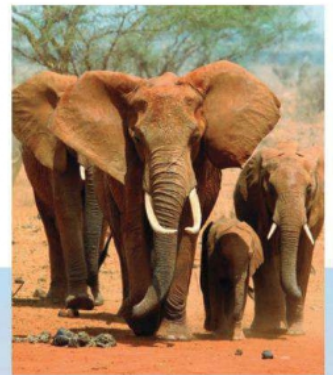
Everyone knows about this park's loudest residents—the chimpanzees made famous by Jane Goodall. But when you walk into its ancient forests, you'll be charmed by its other denizens as well: olive baboons, colobus monkeys, and an endless variety of birds.

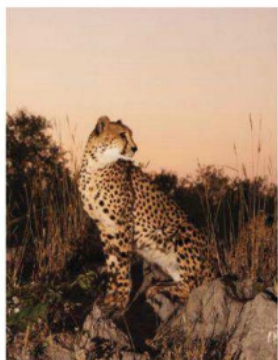
Mahale Mountains National Park

In this remote and rare enclave, the majesty of the Mahale Mountains meets the blue waters of Tanganyika—the world's longest and cleanest freshwater lake. Cruise across it, then climb into the mountains' folds, and you'll be in the land of the chimpanzee, now a vanishing breed in Africa's wilds.

Rubondo Island National Park

Rising from the southwest corner of Lake Victoria, this island idyll overlooks a vast aquatic kingdom filled with huge fish—the Nile perch—stealthy crocodiles, and a strange water antelope, the sitatunga. A blizzard of birds wheels through the skies, and the smells of wild jasmine and orchids scent the air.





EASTERN PARK

Saadani National Park

The sea casts its spell over Saadani, home to a stunningly diverse coastal rain forest and the ruins of the historic port that gave the park its name. Both onshore and off, wildlife reign, from the grazing buffalo, waterbuck, reedbuck, and warthogs of the savanna to the humpbacks and green turtles of the sea.

NORTHERN PARKS

Arusha National Park

Though it's too often overlooked by safari enthusiasts, Arusha is a wonderful place to visit. You'll find all kinds of animals here: colobus and blue monkeys as well as turacos and trogon birds. Keep an eye out for leopards and spotted hyenas, and don't miss the buffalo and warthogs that graze the marshy floor of stunning Ngurdoto Crater.

Kilimanjaro National Park

The jewel in the continental crown, Mount Kilimanjaro rises almost 20,000 feet in solitary splendor. Though it is the world's highest freestanding mountain, its slopes will welcome you as you make your way through lush woodlands and fantastical forests of giant heather and lobelia to reach the summit—an icy, exhilarating victory you'll never forget.

Lake Manyara National Park

The Rift Valley, a classic jungle patrolled by troops of baboons and monkeys, a grand flamingo-filled lakeshore, and the distant blue of volcanic peaks—no wonder Ernest Hemingway called this setting “the loveliest” he had seen in Africa. And its circuit road makes it easy to see the grazing buffalo, zebras, and giraffes.

Mkomazi National Park

The snows of Kilimanjaro hover above the hills of this newly designated park, where you'll find herds of grazing giraffes, elephants, zebras, elands, buffalo, and horned oryx and kudu, as well as extremely endangered black rhinos and African wild dogs. And if you're a bird-watcher, bring your life list, because 450 species have been spotted here.

Serengeti National Park

The Serengeti has come to symbolize all the grandeur of Africa, and its annual migration of a million wildebeests is one of the greatest spectacles the planet has to offer. In fact, Tanzania's oldest and most popular park has recently been declared by some to be the seventh wonder of the world.

Tarangire National Park

This park's namesake river is a dry-season lifeline to hundreds of elephants and thousands upon thousands of zebras, impalas, gazelles, hartebeests, eland, and buffalo. Only the Serengeti tops it in its panoply of life, including birds worthy of superlatives—the world's largest ostrich species, the world's heaviest flying bird (the kori bustard)—some 550 species in all.

You can find the place of your dreams in Tanzania's parks. Make a circuit loop through some of them or concentrate on a few that appeal to you. You'll find all the information you need on each park as well as tour operators and details on how to plan your trip at www.tanzaniaparks.com.

SERENGETI: HOME OF THE GREAT MIGRATION



You have to see it to believe it—1.5 million wildebeests thundering across the Serengeti on their year-long migration, following the rain and the green it brings forth. For ten months they're in the Serengeti and when you're on a safari there, you can almost feel what the herd feels, as they race against the weather and keep a wary eye out for the lions, cheetahs, hyenas, and wild dogs that are always on the prowl.

You'll find yourself scanning the land as well, rooting for the new calves and admiring the surreal beauty of the zebra and gazelle herds that bring up the front and rear of this vast hoofed caravan. And you'll hold your breath when they reach the Mara River, where Nile crocodiles 20 feet long are lying in wait, ready to bring down the unlucky members of the herd.

For more information, visit www.tanzaniaparks.com.



Tanzania through the eyes of *National Geographic Traveler's* Digital Nomad

Andrew Evans is beginning his next big adventure, this time to Tanzania's national parks. He'll be focusing especially on some of the fabulous southern parks. So follow Andrew's posts as he makes his way from one phenomenal encounter to the next, experiencing Tanzania's wildlife, people, and places as only Andrew can. He'll give you the kind of rich detail that makes you feel you're right there with him, uncovering the unusual, the unexpected, and the real feel of



each place and each moment. Once you've had a virtual tour of Tanzania's unique parks through Andrew's eyes and ears, you'll want to see them through your own.

Follow Andrew in Tanzania!
Blog: digitalnomad.nationalgeographic.com
Twitter: @WheresAndrew



Paris Pastimes

A KID-FRIENDLY RAMBLE NEAR THE LOUVRE

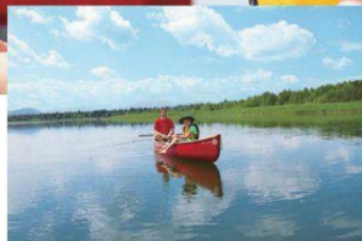


La Grande Roue ("the big wheel") looms over the Place de la Concorde in Paris.

1. Enjoy a grand view of Paris from the Place de la Concorde Ferris wheel through February, or jump on the trampolines near the Concorde entrance anytime of year. **2.** Ease into the museum mind-set at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs for the latest rotating toy exhibit (over 400 vintage *Star Wars* toys, costumes, and video games through March). **3.** Break for a homemade *croque monsieur*—France's grilled cheese—at A Jean Nicot bistro on Rue St. Honoré. **4.** Grab a bench in the Palais Royal courtyard while the kids clamber around the maze of 260 black-and-white columns by artist Daniel Buren. **5.** Snag a Ladurée bubble-gum-flavored *macaron* and a shorter line into the Louvre at the Carrousel du Louvre underground shopping mall entrance. **6.** Ditch the day crowds by taking advantage of the Louvre's evening hours on Wednesdays and Fridays until 9:45 p.m. **7.** Instead of heading straight for the "Mona Lisa," follow one of the museum's thematic tours like "Outsize!" featuring colossal works of art, including a pharaoh's granite sarcophagus. **8.** On fair-weather days, stop at a Tuileries Garden pond to launch a model sailboat. **9.** Refuel at Angelina on Rue de Rivoli, where generations of Parisian kids have slurped the city's thickest hot chocolate. **10.** Rest tired feet with a boat ride to the Eiffel Tower on the Batobus water shuttle (from the Louvre stop under the Pont du Carrousel). —CEIL MILLER-BOUCHET



Focal length: 270mm (equivalent to 419mm)
Exposure: F/6.3 1/640 sec ISO320
WB: Auto Handheld



Focal length: 18mm (equivalent to 28mm)
Exposure: F/5.6 1/1600 sec ISO320
WB: Auto Handheld

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ECO-LODGES ALONG THE PACIFIC COAST CONNECT MEXICO TO ITS ROOTS

By JACKIE CARADONIO

SPRAWLING RESORTS with swim-up bars may be the default for many when it comes to Mexican retreats, but outside the hotel-lined sands of the country's most popular beaches lie a growing number of eco-lodges intent on scaling back the trendy amenities in favor of being friendly to Earth. These green getaways are ideal winter retreats, when cool evening breezes become nature's air conditioner, and animal sightings are at their greatest.

HANG LOOSE Located just outside the drowsy surf town of Todos Santos north of Cabo San Lucas on the Baja peninsula, the hacienda that houses **Villa Santa Cruz's** four suites appears as though it has been there for

centuries. At the entrance, a grand atrium centers on a reclaimed *cantera* stone fountain, while cozy rooms brim with recycled details like antique wooden doors from San Miguel de Allende and mosaic floor tiles from La Paz. The 20-acre estate operates on its own solar power and uses gas lamps to light the villa at night. Home-style meals are prepared with local seafood and fresh vegetables from the organic garden. Guests are welcome to join a cooking lesson in the villa's kitchen or a fishing outing along the estate's coastline. From November to April, humpback whales pass nearby shores on their annual migration. Catch a glimpse of their journey from the villa's rooftop terrace or at nearby La Pastora, the local surfers' favorite beach. From \$165.

SOUL SANCTUARY Set within the Chamela-Cuixmala Biosphere Reserve some 100 miles south of Puerto Vallarta lies **Cuixmala**, a combination eco-resort, coconut plantation, animal sanctuary, and working farm. The 25,000-acre preserve, whose name means "the soul's resting place," is home to sea turtles, zebras, black-buck antelope, and rare species like the Mexican bearded lizard. Between the preserve's lagoon and its main beach are five villas and nine casitas decorated with vibrant woven rugs and Oaxacan fabrics made by local artisans. Guided and independent hikes explore the resort's organic farm and livestock (supplying 90 percent of the resort's food) and track its native bird population (made up of 270 species). Guests can also join the Cuixmala Ecological

Cuixmala sits in a biosphere reserve full of diverse wildlife.





Villa Santa Cruz offers colorful rooms in Todos Santos, Baja California Sur.

Foundation in protecting baby sea turtles by collecting newly laid eggs for incubation and releasing hatchlings back to sea. From \$400.

SOLAR FLOWER Situated on a protected cove along the Pacific Ocean's Banderas Bay south of Puerto Vallarta, the secluded **Majahuitas Resort** (named after a yellow hibiscus-like flower that grows there) is approachable only via *panga*, or a small fisherman's boat. The eight-casita resort, on communal property that belongs to the indigenous Chacala community, is largely solar-powered, relying on candles to illuminate the night, and shunning modern technology with TV-free rooms. Guests can join guided hikes through the jungle to the Quimixto waterfall or catch a panga to the tiny fishing village of Yelapa, lined with golden beaches and cafés. But the real culinary attraction remains at Majahuitas's restaurant, where hundreds of votive candles light the tables, and nightly three-course meals offering tuna fish empanadas and coconut mango shrimp are prepared with bounty from the resort's garden and daily catches from village fishermen. From \$250.

VINE INTERVENTION The valleys and colossal boulders surrounding **Endémico** sit amid a little-known wine country in the Valle de Guadalupe of Mexico's Baja California peninsula. Opened in July, the 40-acre site offers 20 cubelike cabins perched atop stilts. Inside, the decor is minimal, though details like outdoor clay fireplaces from nearby Tecate are unmistakably Mexican. Guests can explore the estate's vineyards, wine-production facility, and slow-food restaurant or find respite from the desert heat in a pool etched into a cliff above the cabins. At night, make time for serious stargazing. Wherever visitors roam, however, they are asked to tread lightly: Cars are forbidden in certain areas, and guests must rely on staff members driving all-terrain vehicles to navigate the rugged landscape. From \$175. ■

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Visitors promenade alongside Burj Khalifa Lake, where the Dubai Fountain spectacle is choreographed to music nightly.

A Day in Dubai

OFF-THE-SHIP ADVENTURES IN THE UAE'S GLITZY DESERT SHEIKDOM

By LAURA KINIRY

WITH THE RECESSION behind it, Dubai (within the United Arab Emirates) is back to building opulent hotels and reigniting its reputation as a Las Vegas of the Middle East. But step away from its Guinness World Record-winning skyscrapers, and you'll find a multicultural emirate with a centuries-old maritime history.

BRIDGING CULTURES A short walk from the cruise terminal, Dubai's dual **Heritage and Diving Village** re-creates the traditional life of locals before the emirate's emergence as a glitzy, pulsating hub. Explore Bedouin huts made of mud and *barasti*, dried palm leaves; watch potters at their throwing wheels; and view pearl diving boats that highlight a once prominent profession dating back some 7,000 years. Next, hop in a taxi across town to the historic district of **Al Bastakiya**, a maze of narrow paths meandering among flat, sand-colored structures made from coral stones. These former

residences of Iranian pearl and textile traders now house coffee shops and art galleries. Bastakiya is home to the **Sheikh Mohammed Centre for Cultural Understanding**, where visitors can ask local Muslims about their customs while seated on pillows around a meal that includes *lughaimat*—round, sweet dough balls served with date syrup. The **Dubai Museum** in Al Fahidi Fort, an 18th-century military relic on Dubai Creek, is within easy walking distance. Along with viewing dioramas depicting desert life, travelers can obtain passes to visit archaeological excavation sites in Dubai's Al Qusais and Jumeirah communities. (4-5 hours)

WITH A VIEW OF THE SEA The high-rise beachfront community of Jumeirah Beach Residence boasts the **Walk**, a mile-long stretch of restaurants, souvenir shops, and big-name retailers like Lagerfeld and Thomas Sabo. From October through May it's also home to **Covent Garden Market Dubai**, an outdoor spread of 55 artisan stalls selling hand-painted ceramic bowls

and necklaces crafted from freshwater pearls. According to expat Lynn Gervais, "In the evenings the area becomes bumper to bumper with car aficionados cruising in their Ferraris and Lamborghinis." (3 hours)

SPORT AND SPEND Start the morning with tour operator Arabian Adventures and a four-wheel-drive to **Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve**, an hour's drive inland from the emirate's urban center. Half-day excursions include sand-boarding (similar to snowboarding except done on steep orange dunes) and driving a dune buggy of your own across the Arabian Desert. Shopping's a great way to switch gears following an adrenaline-filled morning: Dubai's *suqs*, or Arab markets, are the best places to haggle for everything from pashmina scarves to gold bracelets. Start at the **Dubai Spice Suq**, easy to reach from Bastakiya via an *abra*—or water taxi—across Dubai Creek. Then swing by the **Perfume Suq**, where you can create customized scents from essential oils like jasmine and sandalwood. (5-6 hours) ■

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15 UNDISCOVERED SKI AREAS

Montana's 15 ski areas run the gamut from immense Big Sky Resort to little mom-and-pops like Lost Trail Powder Mountain, each offering their own twist on the Montana experience. And while each resort has its own personality, every one of them is imbued with a similar dose of pure Montana: epic views, deep powder, honest western hospitality and wide-open spaces.

DESTINATION RESORTS WITH NO LIFT LINES

1. Big Sky Resort
2. Bridger Bowl
3. Moonlight Basin
4. Red Lodge Mountain Resort
5. Whitefish Mountain Resort

HIDDEN GEMS FOR A WEEKEND GETAWAY

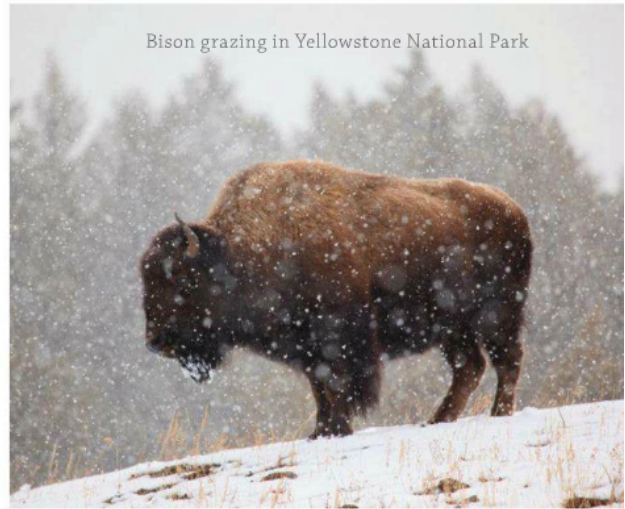
6. Discovery Ski Area
7. Lookout Pass Ski and Rec Area
8. Montana Snowbowl
9. Showdown Montana

DAY AREAS WITH LIFT TICKETS UNDER \$37

10. Bear Paw Ski Bowl
11. Blacktail Mountain Ski Area
12. Great Divide
13. Lost Trail Powder Mountain
14. Maverick Mountain
15. Turner Mountain

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Bison grazing in Yellowstone National Park



GLACIER & YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARKS

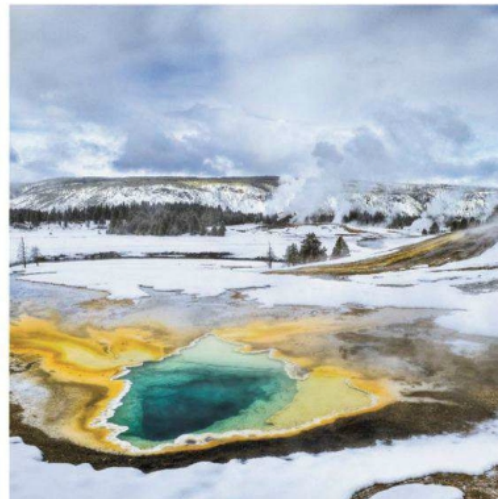
Opportunities for solitude abound. Cross-country ski past steam-breathing bison to Old Faithful or tour Yellowstone from the cozy comfort of a snowcoach. Strap on snowshoes or take a guided backcountry ski trip through Glacier's untouched winter wilderness. Both offer a chance to marvel at Montana's wealth of natural wonders.

MILLIONS OF ACRES OF UNTRACKED POWDER

Try a new winter sport this year—put on some skis and hitch yourself to a horse for a bit of skijoring or try your hand at ice fishing. Learn how to ice climb or handle a team of sled dogs. Of course, there are tamer options, like heading straight to a soak in one of Montana's many natural hot springs. Whatever way you choose to spend your time in Montana, you'll leave feeling that you've touched something deep in winter's core and deep in yourself.



REMARKABLE YELLOWSTONE COUNTRY



Snowmobiling through Yellowstone Country, photo courtesy of John Layshock. Thermal feature in Yellowstone National Park.

Breathtaking scenery, a friendly atmosphere and tons of dry powder make Yellowstone Country the ideal winter location to get out and play. America's Winter Playground™ offers downhill and cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, snowshoeing, snow-coach tours and more.

Alpine Skiing Adventures

Enjoy more than 300 inches of annual snowfall, fewer crowds, and outstanding downhill and backcountry skiing at world-class resorts such as Big Sky, Moonlight Basin, Bridger Bowl and Red Lodge Mountain. Known for the "Biggest Skiing in America," Big Sky Resort and Moonlight Basin deliver incredible terrain and almost no lift lines. You'll find a big mountain experience at small-town rates. Red Lodge Mountain Resort is known for its low-key, family-friendly mountain atmosphere and caters to all experience levels. Be sure to check out the numerous après-ski offerings at each resort.

Cross-Country Ski Escapades

Yellowstone Country features some of the finest and most extensive cross-country terrain in the world. Here, the snow arrives early and stays late (November-April). Just ten minutes from Big Sky, Lone Mountain Ranch offers 80 kilometers of groomed trails for all ability levels. At Bohart Ranch near Bozeman, enjoy stunning scenery, solitude and wildlife sightings. Located adjacent to the Continental Divide, the Rendezvous Ski Trail system in West Yellowstone is famous for its ultra-reliable snow and encompasses a variety of terrain from gentle hills to challenging climbs. For a unique cross-country experience, check out Yellowstone National Park. You can visit areas of the Park not accessible by any other means.

Yellowstone National Park

Experience the glory of frosted pine trees, crystalline snow, frozen waterfalls and bubbling geothermal springs. The Park's winter entrances, all located in Montana, provide a

convenient gateway to miles of groomed and backcountry trails. In addition to cross-country skiing, you can snowshoe in silent wonder or take a guided snowmobile or snow-coach tour over iconic landscapes. Observant visitors will see a wide variety of wildlife.

Sled It Up

Considered the "Sturgis of snowmobiling," the areas of West Yellowstone, Cooke City and Yellowstone National Park feature over 600 miles of groomed trails. Feeling adventurous? Explore acres of untouched back-country powder via snowmobile.

VisitYellowstoneCountry.com/NatGeo





THE ROAD TO FREEDOM IS PAVED WITH SNOW

When it comes to the best powder in America, look no further than Montana's Yellowstone Country. With annual snowfall amounts well in excess of 300 dry, light inches and completely uncrowded terrain, Yellowstone Country offers the perfect canvas for you to express your creative freedom, regardless of what snow-based activity you're into.

www.VisitYellowstoneCountry.com/NatGeo

Yellowstone Country
MONTANA

 Jeff Hawke



Enjoy après-ski in quaint Whitefish.

WINTER IN WHITEFISH

Welcoming, charming, exhilarating and beautiful are some of the best ways to describe Whitefish, Montana. This lively and friendly town offers dining and shopping, along with theater, art galleries and live music. Located in the Northern Rocky Mountains it's the perfect gateway to winter fun.

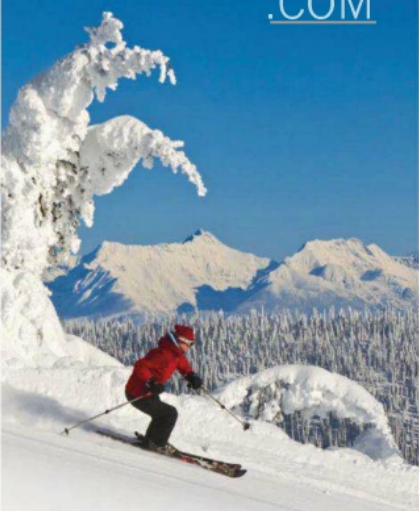
Whitefish Mountain Resort, a top-rated ski resort and one of North America's largest, is less than 20 minutes from downtown Whitefish. Additionally, the mountain is only 19 miles from Glacier Park International Airport and seven miles from an Amtrak train station that has daily arrivals from points east and west. The mountain boasts a unique combination of moderate elevation, high humidity and a mild climate—translating to increased stamina and more restful sleep, which means more time on the mountain for visitors.

Beyond skiing, there are winter activities for all types of adventure seekers. The annual Whitefish Winter Carnival features Montana's own extreme sport of skijoring races where skiers are pulled by horses. Glacier National Park and the nearby pristine wilderness offers dogsledding, sleigh rides, cross-country skiing, ice skating and snowshoeing.

Plan your winter escape at www.ExploreWhitefish.com.



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Where the Wild Things Are

ALONG THE SEAS AND REEFS OF THE FLORIDA KEYS,
THE NEXT ADVENTURE IS JUST A HOP, SKIP, OR JUMP AWAY

By ELAINE GLUSAC
Photographs by KRIS DAVIDSON

Palm pilot: The Moorings Village resort is docked oceanside in Islamorada, Florida.

PHOTO: GREGG

CRAB AND LOBSTER TRAPS pile high in the parking lot of Keys Fisheries in Marathon, Florida, a wharf magnet for seafood lovers who crave a side of satire with their stone crabs. “Road Runner, your order’s up!” the loudspeaker booms, and the customer with the comic alias (one is required when you order) picks up his lobster Reuben. The underlying message? Don’t take life—or the Florida Keys—too seriously.

That refrain repeats over a hundred miles of some of America’s most improbably located blacktop. Skipping across dozens of islands and sailing over water, the running stitch that is southernmost U.S. 1—aka the Overseas Highway—bastes the Florida Keys to the mainland. Bankrolled by Standard Oil tycoon Henry Flagler, the route opened in 1912 as a railway linking the shipping port of southern Key West northward over

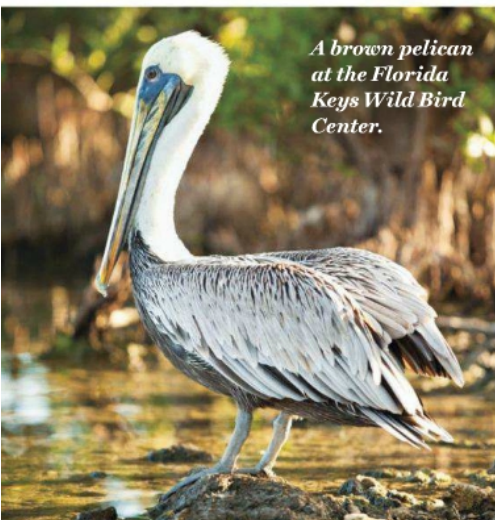
steel tracks, riveted to coral and mangrove knobs and jumping over 42 ocean-footed spans (including the famous Seven Mile Bridge). Critics pegged the project “Flagler’s Folly,” and in 1935 a Category 5 hurricane proved them right. The engineering marvel toppled, adding the industrialist to the list of dreamers and dropouts whose legacy lives on here at this remote tip of Florida, from Blackbeard to Jimmy Buffett, Cuban exiles to “Conch Republic” separatists (in 1982 Key West declared itself a micronation in a tongue-in-cheek secession).

Beginning some 60 miles south of Miami, the drive from Key Largo to Key West showcases quirky islanders past and present as well as the archipelago’s natural assets. Atlantic-to-Gulf panoramas sprawl across islands often barely wider than the road. And alongside tacky souvenir stands and funky roadhouses are endangered herds of elfin Key deer, massive bird and wildlife

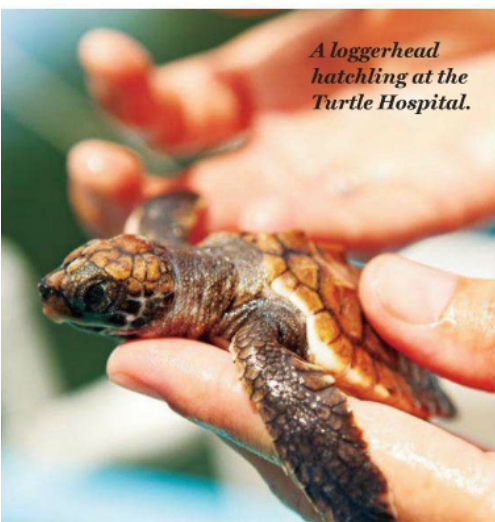
sanctuaries, and the only living barrier coral reef in the continental U.S.

At the visitors center on Key Largo, greeter Jessica Lovejoy likes to joke that the gateway to the Keys is “seven miles of diving and drinking.” Yet even in this margarita mecca, it’s clear that diving comes first. The 2,900-square-nautical-mile **Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary**, with its living coral and teeming fish life, acts as a buffer for the islands. An ideal spot to access it is **John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park**, an offshore park that’s more ocean than land. Glass-bottom boat tours weave through mangrove canals en route to the reef where snorkelers plunge into a vibrant, textured wilderness of spongy anemones, stony corals such as star and brain corals, spiky sea urchins, and sinuous nurse sharks.

As you skim southward on the (mostly) two-lane highway, bridges leap over channels, manatee-shaped mailboxes picket



A brown pelican at the Florida Keys Wild Bird Center.



A loggerhead hatchling at the Turtle Hospital.



DETAILS

Distance: 106 miles, Key Largo to Key West

When to go: November to August

Tip: Avoid

driveways, seagulls race cars, and anglers cast off from decaying piers. Once part of the Over-Sea Railroad, those piers give sculptural testament to industry arrested by nature. Time and again in these parts, man and nature collude to make art out of the landscape. **Bahia Honda State Park's** historic railroad bridge, now a pedestrian pier, strikes a dramatic pose as it juts nearly a mile into the water. Even beachcombers get in on the act, using **Sandspur Beach** as their canvas. "I call it Florida Christmas," says one as he fishes a clamshell from the shallows to ornament a branch of one of the festooned sea grape trees lining the white-sand beach.

If the views haven't driven you to ease your pedal pressure, the many speed traps along the route surely will. It's more than ticket fines local police officers have in mind. On Big Pine Key, a motorcycle cop regularly idles with a sign broadcasting 150 Key deer roadkills last year, in spite of



The order window at Keys Fisheries.



MORE TO EXPLORE Into the Wild

The Florida Keys embrace every sense of the word "wild," from prolific natural wonders to "Margaritaville"-style nightlife. Whether bird-watching or kayaking, diving deep into the wilderness of the island chain delivers a natural buzz (without the influence of Jimmy Buffett or his lost salt shaker). ① On Tavernier at the **Florida Keys Wild Bird Center**, look for cages of rehabilitating peregrine falcons and screech owls sharing the steamy forest with wild flocks of brown pelicans, great egrets, and cormorants. ② Assist researchers as they run trials that involve playing games of "hide and seek" with the dolphins at the **Dolphin Research Center** on Grassy Key. ③ Tour Marathon's **Turtle Hospital**, which cares for rescued sea turtles, ranging from tiny loggerhead hatchlings to a 325-pound green turtle with a collapsed lung. ④ Take a snorkeling tour to **Looe Key Sanctuary Preservation Area** from **Bahia Honda State Park** for the best underwater viewing of the Lower Keys. ⑤ In **Great White Heron National Wildlife Refuge**, paddle among mangrove islands with photographer and author Bill Keogh of **Big Pine Kayak Adventures** as you scan the seas for baby sharks and stingrays. ⑥ Off Key West, catch and release bonefish and blue marlin with Captain Mike Weinhofer of **Compass Rose Charters**. —E.G.

driving U.S. 1 at night, when some speed limits drop due to low visibility and animal activity. **Plan your trip:** For more details, visit www.fl-keys.com.

the efforts of **National Key Deer Refuge** to protect its dwarf-like namesake. At the end of Key Deer Boulevard, bucks with velvet antlers often emerge from the forest of saw palmettos and slash pines to graze on roadside grass. According to one park ranger, endemic Key deer "have no natural predators, other than speeding cars." In other words: Slow down, and keep an eye out for the endangered creatures.

Beyond the Lower Keys lie more than 400,000 acres of water containing hundreds of remote islands protected by the **Key West and Great White Heron National Wildlife Refuges**. "The Lower Keys are just a door to the backcountry for a lot of locals," says Victoria Impallomeni-Spencer of Dancing Dolphin Spirits Charters. That wilderness is where she steers the *Imp II*, her 25-foot powerboat, in search of dolphins, luring the graceful sea creatures with the violin music of Itzhak Perlman. On deserted islands in this "backcountry," shells pile ankle-high on bleach-blond strands.

At mile marker 0, Key West is the island chain's last outpost of civilization, with shipwright-built captain's mansions alongside modest wooden shacks, backstopped by the **Southernmost Point** alleging the closest place on U.S. soil to Cuba, 90 miles away. Debauchery reigns on saloon-heavy Duval Street and in public perception, though plenty of islanders proclaim an art scene that thrives thanks to four live theaters, symphony performances, and storefronts such as **Gallery on Greene**, where the works of 37 local artists take turns on the walls.

That dynamic builds on cultural cachet left over from John James Audubon and Ernest Hemingway. In 1832, ornithologist Audubon visited what is now the **Audubon House and Tropical Gardens** to document American birds. The house features 30 of his first-edition illustrations, including the mango hummingbird and roseate spoonbill. And from 1931 to 1940, Papa famously straddled Key West's party and arty sects, drafting *For Whom the Bell Tolls* at the 1851 **Hemingway Home and Museum**. Now the creaky mansion is inhabited by 45 mostly six-toed cats that descended from the writer's polydactyl pet, Snowball. Docents point out highlights ranging from Hemingway's "gallery of wives" to a lush garden of hibiscus and bougainvillea. "People like to get married here," says guide Steve Trogner. "The fact that Hemingway was divorced three times doesn't seem to matter."

At sunset on the waterfront, Key West's current cast of characters crowd **Mallory Square** for a nightly carnival of sword swallowers, unicyclists, and guitar strummers with parrots perched on their shoulders (because, well, why not?). Here the local mode of travel is a beach bicycle—the more broken down, the better. "I'm proud to say I've got a bike that goes slower than most people walk," says islander Tony Falcone, co-founder of the Fantasy Fest, a Mardi Gras-style party that takes over town each fall. "It's too hot to rush."

Chicago writer **ELAINE GLUSAC** has been diving and driving the Florida Keys for two decades.



EAT

Catch of the Day

Wood tables, painted chairs, and tiki torches stake the sand at **Morada Bay Beach Café** in Islamorada, where the sunset views rival the snapper seiche and grilled grouper. On Marathon, stop in for blackened mahimahi, conch fritters, and lobster Reuben sandwiches (above) at **Keys Fisheries**. Order at the window; while you wait, peer down at fish from picnic tables beside the water. Generous Cuban-inspired sandwiches from the Key West fast-food window known as **Sandy's Café** make this island's tour's best portable meal—ham-pork-lettuce-and-pickle two-fisters.



SLEEP

Key Amenities

An 18-acre former coconut plantation is now dotted with 18 chic bungalows (above) at the **Moorings Village** in Islamorada. Some 700 towering palms provide shade throughout the property, which includes a 1,100-foot-long private beach equipped with kayaks and stand-up paddleboards. Guests borrow beach bikes to ride to local restaurants, play tennis at on-site courts, and cool off in a lap pool. On Key West, **Eden House** offers 39 rooms in a series of vintage buildings sharing a lushly planted courtyard—think hammocks in the shade and chaise lounges around the pool. Guests gather nightly in this de facto living room for a complimentary happy hour. —E.G.



Tarot reader and self-proclaimed mystic Ron Augustine joins the nightly sunset soiree at Mallory Square on Key West's bustling waterfront.



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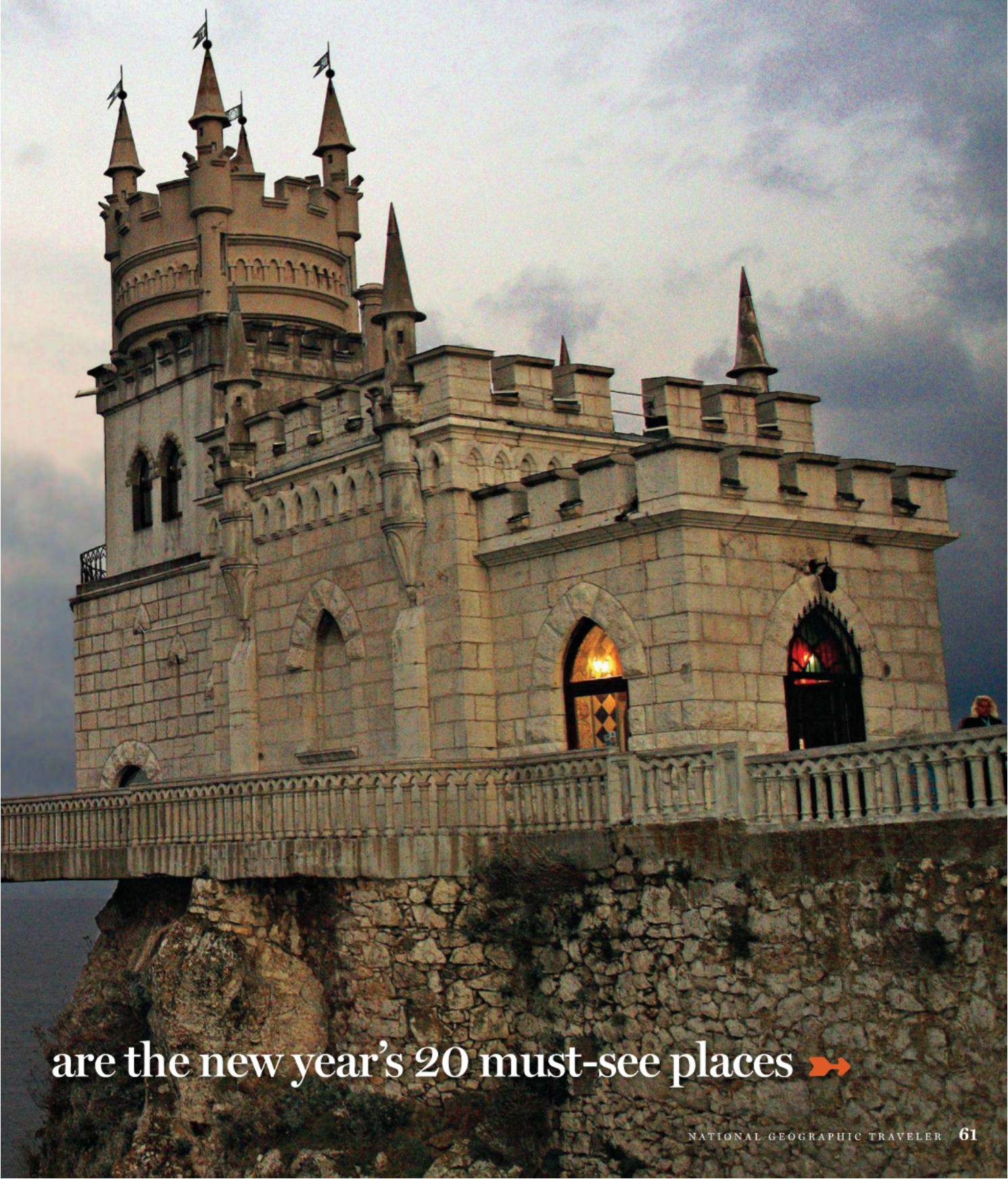
Above: In the Galápagos Islands, a photographer captures the image of a giant tortoise.

BEST *of the* WORLD

2013

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*Sentinel over the Black Sea,
the Swallow's Nest is an
early 20th-century castle on
Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula.*



are the new year's 20 must-see places ➞

CRIMEA

Playground of the tsars

"Russia needs its paradise," Prince Grigory Potemkin, Catherine the Great's general, wrote in 1782 urging the annexation of

Crimea, and no wonder.

The Crimean Peninsula, with its voluptuously curved Black Sea coast of sparkling cliffs, is paradise—with Riviera-grade vistas but without Riviera prices. Balmy with 300 days of sun a year ("It is never winter here," said the writer Anton Chekhov, who had a dacha near Yalta), the place served as the playground of tsars and Politburo fat cats. Russians practically wept when, after the breakup of the Soviet Union, Crimea was pulled out of the orbit of Russian rule and became part of an independent Ukraine.

A trace of Soviet hangover endures in the form of unsmiling babushkas and concrete block architecture. Visitors can tour the once

secret nuclear-blast-proof Soviet submarine base in Balaklava, a piece of Cold War history, now a museum. Afterward, retreat to one of the briny health resorts of the west and east coasts for a therapeutic mud bath, or go for a run down to Livadia Palace in Yalta, scene of the 1945 conference that reconfigured postwar Europe.

Summer is high season, crowded with Russian and eastern European tourists (North Americans are still rare). In autumn the air turns soft and it's harvest time at vineyards like Massandra, built in the 19th century to supply wines for Nicholas II, the last Russian tsar. There you may have the pleasure of tasting a Riesling with the scent of alpine meadows, port the color of rubies, and a nectar called "Seventh Heaven," of which a recent visitor said: "I could kneel in front of this wine." —Cathy Newman

LOCATING THE BEST 2013



- 1 Great Bear Rainforest, British Columbia
- 2 Missouri River Breaks, Montana
- 3 Memphis, Tennessee
- 4 Cape Breton, Nova Scotia
- 5 Hudson Valley, New York
- 6 St. Augustine, Florida
- 7 Grenada
- 8 Quito, Ecuador
- 9 Valparaíso, Chile
- 10 Marseille, France
- 11 Ravenna, Italy
- 12 Bodø, Norway
- 13 Thessaloniki, Greece
- 14 Crimea, Ukraine
- 15 Jarash, Jordan
- 16 Uganda
- 17 Malawi
- 18 Bagan, Myanmar
- 19 Raja Ampat, West Papua, Indonesia
- 20 Kyoto, Japan



Marseille is a carousel of color. This future bride goes for a fling before her wedding.

MARSEILLE

France's new capital of culture

On a once derelict jetty, opposite the stone ramparts of 17th-century Fort St. Jean, a new glass-and-steel building shimmers behind a lacy spider-web facade of finely cast concrete.

Poised between lapis sea and Marseille's sun-drenched hills, the National Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilizations (MuCEM) stands at the entrance to the Vieux-Port, the city's historic heart. And when it opens in



ED KASHI/NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC STOCK

May 2013, MuCEM will be a bold symbol of Marseille's reemergence as a flourishing pan-Mediterranean hub.

Cities may rise and fall, but the great ones—and Marseille is among them—always rise again. Founded by ancient Greeks, France's second largest city was already 500 years old and a bubbling stew of many cultures when Caesar laid siege in 49 B.C. A 20th-century wave of immigrants

from Algeria and some other former French colonies led to Marseille's modern reputation as a city far removed ethnically and psychologically from the rest of France. Despite recent headlines about drug-related crime, Marseille still stands tall as a world-class city.

These days Marseille has every right to act the *cagou* (slang for a show-off) as it and the surrounding Provence region assume the role of 2013

European Capital of Culture. "There is a new energy in the city, especially in music, theater, and museums," says MuCEM director Bruno Suzzarelli. Young, multiethnic crowds gather for cutting-edge happenings at La Friche la Belle de Mai, a tobacco factory turned art and performance center. Major renovations have polished up many of the city's 20-plus museums, including the Musée Cantini,

whose trove of Picassos and Mirós is housed in an elegant 1694 town house. For all the new energy, Marseille's old pleasures remain as alluring as ever: a stroll along the narrow lanes of the Panier Quarter, the lusty aromas of a good bouillabaisse, a boat ride into the fjordlike inlets called *calanques*. It's no wonder that visitors are becoming *fadas* (big fans) of France's southern gateway. —Christopher Hall



Snapped by remote camera, this spirit bear is an elusive sight in British Columbia's threatened wilderness.

GREAT BEAR RAINFOREST

Canada's fragile coastal wilderness

Sometimes you can see both the forest and the trees. The Great Bear Rainforest, the planet's largest intact coastal temperate rain forest, is an untamed strip of land stretching 250 miles along British Columbia's coast that harbors extensive tracts of giant hemlock, Sitka spruce, and red cedar. The mighty trees rise high above a moist and ferny forest floor patrolled by coastal wolves, minks, Canada's largest grizzly bears, and rare white Kermode spirit bears. This tranquillity has recently been rocked by a proposal to send tar sands crude oil from Alberta to a terminal

at Kitimat in the Great Bear Rainforest. The project would entail two pipelines crossing some of the world's largest salmon-producing watersheds and a steady procession of supertankers plying the narrow channels. The local First Nations and environmental groups are vehemently opposed, fearing the catastrophic effects of an *Exxon Valdez*-type spill. "This is a wilderness sanctuary, a very spiritual place," says Ian McAllister, founding director of Pacific Wild. "The pipelines would fundamentally alter the coast forever." A decision on the pipelines could come by the end of 2013. —Robert Earle Howells

CAPE BRETON

Nova Scotia's treasured island

During the 18th and 19th centuries, fishermen and settlers from France and Scotland came to Cape Breton Island, drawn by its rich fisheries, ample timber, and the chance of a better life. Originally settled by the ancient ancestors of the Micmac people, this island off Nova Scotia now lures visitors with its abundant wildlife, natural beauty, and assembly of French, Micmac, and Celtic cultures.

One-fifth of Cape Breton is preserved as a national park, laced by 25 hiking paths and looped by the Cabot Trail, a 186-mile driving route frequently ranked among the world's most spectacular. "I have seen the Canadian and American Rockies, the Andes, the Alps, and the Highlands of Scotland," said inventor Alexander Graham Bell, who spent 37 summers here. "But for simple beauty, Cape Breton outrivals them all."

The mingling of cultures means you can seek a clan tartan at the craft shop at Gaelic College/Colaisde Na Gàidhlig in St. Anns, then explore the French-founded Fortress of Louisbourg on the east coast. In 1745 this garrison withstood a 48-day siege by New Englanders, backed by British naval support, before surrendering. In 2013, the reconstructed fortification celebrates the 300th anniversary of the founding of the French colony of Île Royale (present-day Cape Breton). —John Rosenthal

PLACE TO WATCH: DIMEN, CHINA "This well-preserved village in China's Guizhou Province presents a glimpse of the traditional culture of the Dong people, who sustain ancient traditions and handicrafts and value their regional heritage." —Lu Yi, *National Geographic Traveler China*

PAUL NICOLE/ATOCIAL; GEOGRAPHIC STOCK (BEAR); KAREL LEHMANN/GETTY IMAGES (CABIN); OPPOSITE PAGE)

BODØ

Norway's gateway to the Arctic

Flying into Bodø, the plane descends over a seascape covering thousands of isles, while the final approach offers a close-up view of the majestic glaciers and peaks guarding this small capital of Norway's Nordland Province. Arriving by sea (often and deservedly called "the world's most beautiful sea voyage"), the famous Hurtigruten coastal ships give passengers a glimpse to the northwest of the imposing 62-mile chain of spiky mountains that forms the mythic-seeming Lofoten archipelago.

Bodø is less than one degree north of the Arctic Circle. Without the warming effect of the Gulf Stream, the landscape would be a frozen, inhospitable waste at this

latitude. In fact, Bodø offers cycling, skiing, hiking, caving, climbing, and fishing. Many visitors come here for the unique Arctic light, whether the soft pastels of winter that crescendo in a display of aurora borealis or the orange glow of summer's midnight sun (the best viewpoint for both is from the Landegode lighthouse). Don't leave without seeing the Saltstraumen sound, where deep, swirling eddies form every six hours with the change in tides as the equivalent of 160,000 Olympic-size pools of water surge through a narrow passage. Above all, northern Norway has this to offer: the absence of distractions and the chance of an intimate encounter with awe-inspiring nature. —*Arild Molstad*

KYOTO

Meditation and modernism in Japan

One of Kyoto poet Buson's most famous haikus reads: "On the one-ton temple bell a moon-moth, folded into sleep, sits still." If Japan is the temple bell, Kyoto is the moth—tranquil, delicate, intricate, and wildly mysterious, centuries after the first outsider was drawn to its woodsy hilltop Shinto shrines and rarefied Buddhist temples. The city is about to get an influx of luxury hotels, making room for more tourists, but for now a golden-hour walk along the Kamo riverbank still reveals the gentleness and gracefulness of Japan's ancient capital, as does a self-guided tour of the 1.1-mile canalside Philosopher's Path in the Higashiyama neighborhood.

Transfixed by Kyoto's wealth of historic structures, visitors sometimes overlook the city's compelling modernist sites. The Shigemori Residence features a dynamic Zen garden designed by mid-20th-century landscape architect Mirei Shigemori. Pritzker Prize winner Tadao Ando's eccentric Garden of Fine Arts features oversize portraits of Leonardo da Vinci's "The Last Supper" and an underwater version of Claude Monet's "Water Lilies." Some 30 miles east, the Miho Institute of Aesthetics, with an edifice designed by I. M. Pei, opened in 2012. His stainless steel teardrop-shaped chapel is a minimalist architectural marvel that conveys Kyoto's cutting-edge energy. —*Adam H. Graham*



Snow-covered cabins suggest a flicker of warmth on a polar night in northern Norway.

ST. AUGUSTINE

Florida's fountain of youth

History books taught us that Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de León “discovered” Florida 500 years ago in 1513 while seeking the fabled fountain of youth. But before the peninsula was claimed by de León, it was home for more than 12,000 years to Paleo-Indians who built civilizations around its water-filled sinkholes and left behind archaeologically rich middens (giant piles of oyster shells) as proof of their bayside existence.

Today, finding a genuine slice of “Old Florida” can be a scavenger hunt. The breezy Spanish colonial city of St. Augustine is an exception to the rule. A pair of marble lions greets visitors crossing the regal Bridge of Lions into the walled city. Looming over it is Castillo de San Marcos, a 17th-century fort surrounded by a moat and occupied at various times by Spanish, British, Confederate and U.S. soldiers. The fort’s warren of

chambers echoes with the stories of pirates, three signers of the Declaration of Independence, Spanish-American War deserters, and even Seminole Chief Osceola, who was incarcerated here in 1837 for leading the native resistance against the U.S.

Along King Street sit historic Flagler College and the Lightner, an antiques museum housed in an 1887 Spanish Renaissance Revival masterpiece. It was commissioned by oil tycoon Henry Flagler, who is credited with salvaging the city and planting Florida’s tourism seeds. St. George Street, St. Augustine’s main drag, may have become overly touristy and crowded with T-shirt emporiums and fudge shops, but the side streets still harbor scrubby garden courtyards and off-the-radar bars, such as the 130-year-old Mill Top Tavern, where you can imagine what Old Florida was like before it became the Sunshine State.

—Adam H. Graham

THESSALONIKI

A bolt of Greece lightning

Thessaloniki’s sparkling harbor is almost empty—a good thing. It remains one of the last urban seafronts in southern Europe not hemmed in by a giant marina. Instead, wooden caiques still ply the quiet bay while footpaths trace the meandering waterfront of Greece’s second largest city, some 320 miles north—and a world away—from chaotic Athens. Although the euro crisis has caused ripples of discontentment here, it’s the century-old street markets filled with ripe fruits and barrels of fresh feta that symbolize this city. Tucked between relics of Byzantine and Ottoman antiquity are art galleries, bohemian nightclubs, and culinary hot spots, all part of a grassroots vision turned reality by Thessaloniki’s large (about 50 percent of the population) do-it-yourself youth culture. “We are driven by our optimism and positive energy for a new way of living that embraces our heritage,” says Vicky Papadimitiou, a university graduate who helped Thessaloniki garner official status as the 2014 European Youth Capital. The best way to get the feel of this mission-driven city is on foot, walking from the ruins of Ano Poli to Aristotelous Square on the waterfront. Then cozy up to a café to nibble grilled calamari washed down with dry Macedonian wine. —Costas Christ



QUITO

The fresh face of Ecuador's old city

Surrounded by bunches of bright sunflowers and chamomile, Rosa Lagla gently performs soul-cleansing *limpia* treatments in a market just a few blocks from Plaza de San Francisco, hub of Quito’s restored Old Town. Rubbing handfuls of stinging

nettles, sweet herbs, and rose petals into the skin drives out bad energy, she says, working the plants to a pulp. With botanicals brimming from plastic bags, Lagla brings the Andean healing practice to guests of the newly restored Casa Gangotena on the plaza. Healer and hotel span two



Quito's Plaza de San Francisco is a monument to the city's spiritual and cultural past.

worlds, the traditional and the modern, both reinvigorating this city of 1.6 million.

For too long, travelers have neglected Ecuador's capital city en route to the nation's marquee attraction, the Galápagos Islands. Though its Spanish colonial center has been enshrined as a UNESCO World Heritage site since 1978, the area has

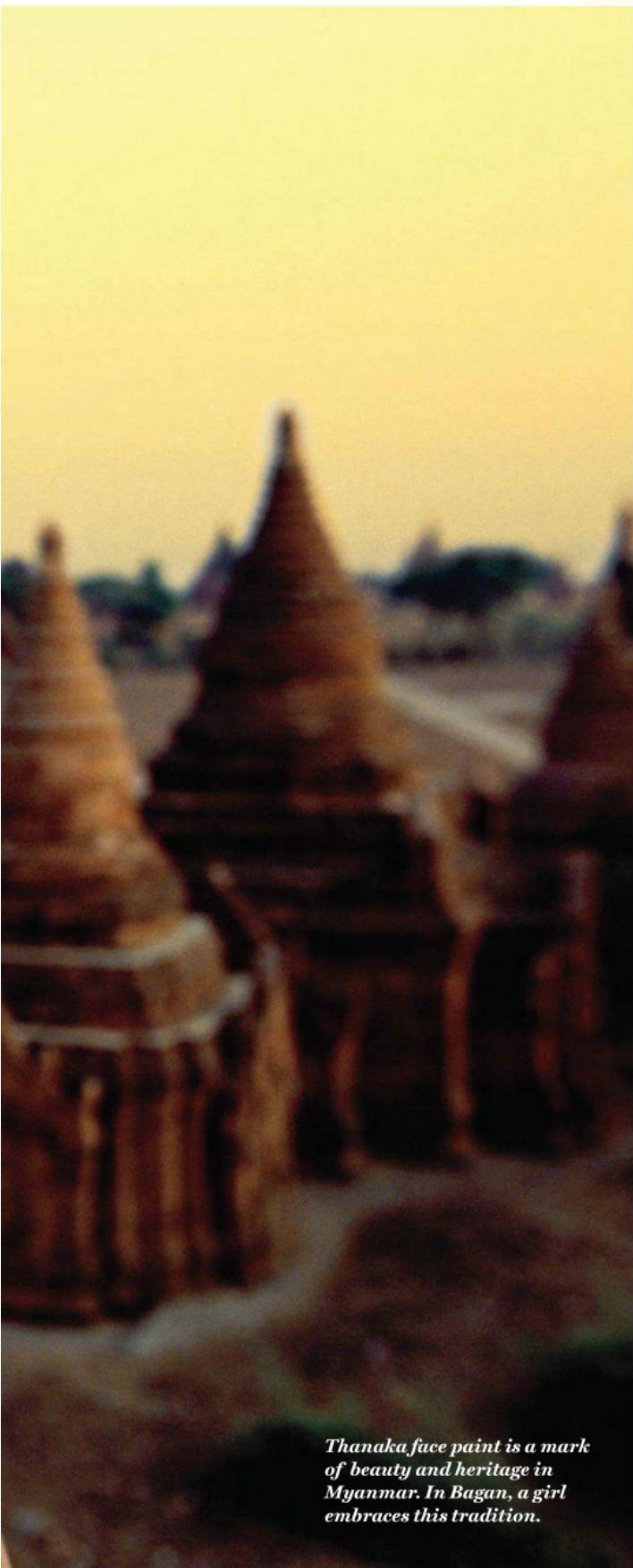
more recently undergone a renaissance warranting longer stays. In the past decade, city officials have invested nearly \$500 million to make improvements to its historic quarter. At Quito's heart, cobblestoned streets and pastel-colored mansions hem the revitalized San Francisco Church. Many restorers of the landmark learned to

apply gold leaf, inlay wood, and chisel statuary in a nearby workshop with a mission to teach skills to impoverished teenagers with an aptitude for art. People are primary in Quito's new museums. Emphasizing storytelling, Casa del Alabado arranges its pre-Columbian art and artifacts thematically to dramatize the mystery of the ancients.

Quito's historic center is now beginning to cultivate a vibrant nightlife. On Calle La Ronda, music sings out from restaurants and bars. But Lagla lifts spirits the old way. Sweeping up sage post-ritual, she says, "*Se fue, el espanto. La energía vuelve*—It's gone, the fright. Energy returns." She could be speaking of Quito, too. —*Elaine Glusac*

PLACE TO WATCH: SALENTO, ITALY "The southeastern extremity of the Apulia region has great beaches, vibrant culture, and authentic food. La Notte della Taranta is a huge, must-see traditional/modern music festival in August." —Stefano Brambilla, *National Geographic Touring Club Italiano*





Thanaka face paint is a mark of beauty and heritage in Myanmar. In Bagan, a girl embraces this tradition.

BAGAN

A spiritual awakening in Myanmar

The once isolated nation at the culturally rich crossroads of India and China is a land that imbues even the most jaded traveler with a sense of wonder.

In Myanmar, government reforms since 2010 and the election of democracy activist (and Nobel Peace Prize recipient) Aung San Suu Kyi to parliament have propelled a profoundly gracious land, formerly known as Burma, onto the world stage. It's about time.

Decades of reclusion have preserved a vibrant culture deeply steeped in Buddhism; especially outside the major urban centers of Yangon and Mandalay, daily life has remained largely untouched by Western trends. Rudyard Kipling's words in *Letters From the East* still ring true: "This is Burma and it will be quite unlike any land you know about."

The best Burmese travel experiences require a bit of

planning, but the rewards are great—especially in Bagan, the arid, pagoda-studded plain along the Ayeyarwady River in Upper Burma where the first Burmese Buddhist kings, their courtiers, and other merit-seeking patrons built thousands of religious monuments from the 11th to 13th centuries. According to Burma scholar Donald Stadtner, these 16 square miles—despite the misguided restoration of some temples in the 1990s—rank among Southeast Asia's most significant sacred ancient sites.

Secure an early morning bird's-eye view of the monuments by booking a Balloons Over Bagan hot-air-balloon-and-sparkling-wine trip; profits fund community service projects on the ground. Spend the afternoon exploring dusty trails by bicycle. At sunset, find a perch and gaze over the panorama of castle-like structures shimmering in the golden light.

—Ceil Miller Bouchet

VALPARAÍSO

Chile's soulful port apart

Generations of creative pilgrims have been hooked by Valparaíso's weathered beauty and bohemian vibe. Travelers have followed suit, coming for the romantic allure of its 42 *cerros* (hills) that ascend sharply from the water. Stacked high with faded mansions, 19th-century funiculars, and battered cobblestones, Valparaíso stands in contrast to the glitzy Viña del Mar resort town to the north. As Chile's vital harbor, it retains the signature grittiness and edge that often endow ports. But Valparaíso is also welcoming a boom of eateries serving inventive Chilean fare, quirky bars offering hoppy microbrews, and antiques-packed B&Bs.

Pablo Neruda, whose former home, La Sebastiana, still lords over Cerro Bellavista, wrote Valparaíso-inspired verse: "I love, Valparaíso, everything you enfold, and everything you irradiate, sea bride.... I love the violent light with which you turn to the sailor on the sea night." A meander through its tangle of steep alleyways and stairways reveals eye-catching street art and ocean views from pedestrian passages that hug the slopes. Then a cool breeze comes off the Pacific, night falls, and silhouettes of hills appear against darker skies, infusing Valparaíso with poetry that seeps through its every pore. —Anja Mutić



The Basilica of Sant'Apollinare in Classe exemplifies Ravenna's glorious Byzantine mosaics.

RAVENNA

A vibrant historical mosaic in Italy

At first glance, there hardly seems to be any comparison between Ravenna and Rome: Ravenna is smaller, sleepier, and without Rome's domed skyline or ruins. But back in the fifth century, it was Ravenna that served as capital of the Western Roman Empire. In this

burgeoning city, Roman rulers built monuments celebrating both Christianity and their own power—monuments famous, then and now, for their sweeping mosaics. Seven of Ravenna's eight buildings from the fifth and sixth centuries are spectacularly decorated with examples of this ancient art. "In the past,

many people couldn't read or write," says tour guide and Ravenna native Silvia Giogoli. "Mosaics were a way to explain the religion, and the political situation, to the people." At the Basilica of San Vitale, a bejeweled Empress Theodora stares across the apse at her husband, Justinian. At Sant'Apollinare Nuovo, two rows of larger-than-life saints march toward the apse. But in Ravenna, mosaics aren't just historical remnants. Visitors admire pieces by contemporary mosaicists including

Chagall, Mathieu, and Vedova at the MAR (Museo d'Arte Ravenna) or poke into cluttered bottegas (workshops) where modern artists use the same methods as their Byzantine forebears. At the Parco della Pace, locals relax beside mosaic sculptures; even the city's street signs glitter with glass fragments. At the 2013 RavennaMosaico, mosaic mania takes hold. Visitors can gawk at new pieces, listen to musicians, and learn to make their own masterpieces.

—Amanda Ruggeri

PLACE TO WATCH: WEST FRISIAN ISLANDS, NETHERLANDS "With their sandy beaches and picturesque villages, the isles of the Wadden Sea are spaces of quiet beauty. I love the unique flora and fauna of Schiermonnikoog." —Paul Romer, *National Geographic Traveler Netherlands*



Malawi is an increasingly steady presence within a dynamic continent. Last year, a political transition introduced the world to Joyce Banda, a progressive new president and the second female chief of state in sub-Saharan Africa. More than a domestic shift, this turning point presents an invitation to explore Africa's best kept secret.

"When you make friends with a Malawian, they watch out for you," says Moses Mphatso Kaufulu, a blogger from the historic British capital of Zomba. "The depth of African experience rests on friendship—this is what makes my country second to none in the world."

Where better to befriend a local than by the lake? Swimming boys laugh as a kaleidoscope of brightly colored fish glitter to the surface. The only high-rise in sight is a jumble of sun-bleached boulders. Malawi offers much more than serene lakes. Dusty roads connect towns, and mountains give way to plains of green maize punctuated by baobab trees. But the nation's heart is a watery realm where waves lap the sand, leaving streaks of silt.

—Andrew Evans

HUDSON VALLEY

New York's original art show

Not even Rip Van Winkle could sleep through the cultural clarion of today's Hudson Valley. The legendary snoozer in Washington Irving's tale might descend from his Catskill Mountains hollow to find some of the country's best folk musicians at the Clearwater Festival in Croton-on-Hudson. Founded by now 93-year-old Pete Seeger, the festival marks its 35th anniversary in 2013. "The Hudson must surely be one of the world's most extraordinary streams," says Seeger. "Other rivers are longer and start higher, but my wife and I and our daughter look every day from the windows of our two-room house and see the Hudson. Bless it!"

Just a couple hours north of New York City, this is a land of mom-and-pop shops, "u-pick" wildflower fields, and organic farm stands where "chain" is a four-letter word. Between the Culinary Institute of America grads too enchanted to leave Hyde Park and the influx of NYC chefs realizing the land is

greener (and apartments bigger) here, area eateries such as Blue Hill at Stone Barns are stoking locavore passions.

Artists of all media find their muses here. Take a drive to the newly expanded Hudson River School Art Trail to see 17 sites in New York that inspired America's great mid-19th-century landscape paintings. "The views that compose the art trail are a national treasure," says Elizabeth B. Jacks, director of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site. Or visit museums such as the outdoor Storm King Art Center sculpture park to see the work of contemporary visionaries.

Some villages marry art and music famously. In the wonderfully weird and artsy Woodstock, indie performers and music icons rub elbows and grab crusty loaves at Bread Alone Bakery. Budding musicians bring their bongos to the weekly hippie drum circle on the Village Green.

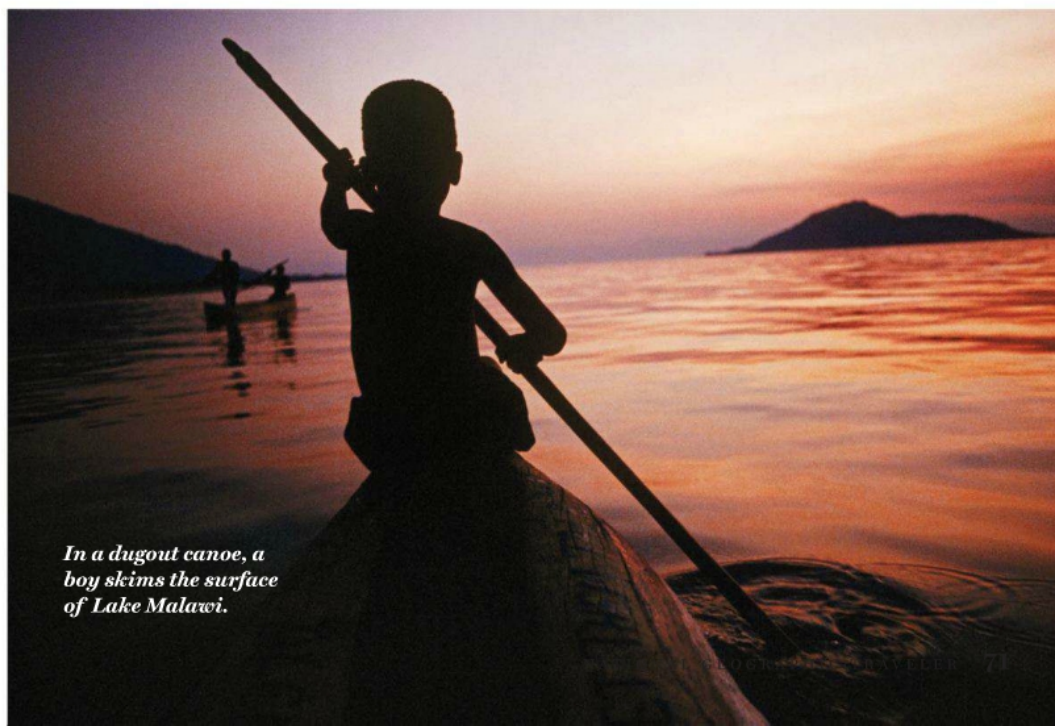
Much like Rip, Hudson Valley wanderers often wake up to find this is where they long to rest their vagabond souls. —Sascha Zuger

MALAWI

Africa's liquid asset

Locals call it the "Lake of Stars," and it's easy to see why. After nightfall, paraffin lamps illuminate Lake Malawi with a constellation of firefly-like flickers; fishermen in dugout canoes work the glassy waters as they have since before the era of the Maravi kingdom.

Deep and clear, the teal lake—Africa's third largest—glimmers in the Great Rift Valley. Bordering Tanzania, Mozambique, and Zambia,



In a dugout canoe, a boy skims the surface of Lake Malawi.

An aerial view of Indonesia's Raja Ampat contrasts emerald isles with sapphire seas.



RAJA AMPAT

An emerging island Eden in Indonesia

Raja Ampat has been dubbed the Amazon of the Oceans. Is that hyperbole? Not really. There are single reefs here containing more species than the entire Caribbean. A mini-archipelago of rain-forest-clad islands, cays, mangroves, and pearlescent beaches off the coast of West Papua, Indonesia, this marine frontier brims with life. Expect close encounters with recent discoveries such as Raja Ampat's walking shark and pygmy seahorse, along with more familiar creatures—manta rays, leatherback turtles, and bumphead parrotfish. Not to mention three-quarters of all known coral species.

The scenery proves just as spectacular above the surface. On Wayag, steep limestone karsts drenched in jungle bisect a cobalt lagoon. Tree canopies filled with rare birds offer lofty theater. It's well worth rising at 3 a.m. to witness the amorous, flamenco-like mating dance of the endemic red bird of paradise.

Remote doesn't mean rough here. Cruise the region aboard an upscale conversion of a traditional *phinisi* schooner or stay at a hideaway such as Misool Eco Resort, with its swanky overwater bungalows. Diving is the draw, but kayaking and trekking are picking up. This is nature at its most vivid, above and below the water. —Johnny Langenheim

GRENADA

Caribbean with a smile

It's one of the last truly Caribbean islands, not yet overwhelmed by resorts and cruise ship crowds. The charm of this lush island lies beyond the white-sand beach of Grand Anse and its string of hotels.

Grenada's capital, St. George's, is one of the prettiest towns in the Caribbean, its jumble of orange roofs tumbling down to the harbor. There, the gray stones of Fort George evoke a history that runs from 1705 through the dark days of 1983, when a military coup by a Communist hard-liner prompted President Ronald Reagan's invasion of the island.

That was an unhappy exception to a happy rule:

Grenadian traditions are an amiable mix of African, Indian, and European—much of it coming together every April on the country's little Carriacou island. The Maroon Festival features drums, string bands, dances, and the "Shakespeare Mas," in which costumed contestants hurl island-accented recitations from *Julius Caesar* at each other. Really.

The weekly "Fish Friday" festival in Gouyave, Grenada's seafood town, offers a marine taste of true Caribbean. Vendors fill the air with scents of fish cakes, shrimp, conch, and beer. Street music makes it a party, with visitors welcome. For most Grenadians, tourists are guests, not sales targets.

DAVID DOUBILET/NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC STOCK



Nutmeg, cloves, ginger, cinnamon, and mace made Grenada the “Spice Island,” and culinary opportunity persists today. The Belmont Estate serves up such local fare as callaloo soup and bergamot ice cream. The dark slabs from the Grenada Chocolate Company are so determinedly organic that chocolate bars exported to Europe have been shipped by wind power on a square-rigged brigantine.

With mangrove-fringed coastlines and coral reefs just offshore, there's plenty of nature. At Mount Hartman, with the right guide at the right time, you might see the national bird: the shy Grenada dove. Fewer than 150 remain on Earth. Indeed, Grenada is becoming a rare bird itself.

—Jonathan B. Tourtellot

MEMPHIS

Tennessee's fast track

It's easy to forget about Memphis, a mid-size American city wedged into the southwest corner of Tennessee. Our collective memory of Memphis seems frozen in the mid-20th century: Elvis and Graceland, B. B. King and Beale Street, Martin Luther King, Jr., and his “Mountaintop” speech—the last he'd give before his assassination on the balcony of Memphis's Lorraine Motel in 1968.

Certain aspects of Memphis's past stifled the city for decades, snuffing the spirits of residents and scaring away visitors. But there's something newly electric in the air.

The Stax Museum of American Soul Music, located on the grounds of the famous Stax Records, is at the forefront of that revival. The museum, along with its Stax Music Academy and the Soulsville Charter School, celebrates its tenth anniversary in 2013 with concerts,

parties, and Stax to the Max, a huge outdoor music festival. It's far from a solo act.

All around Memphis, locals are pursuing grassroots projects more often associated with Brooklyn or the Bay Area. The nonprofit Project Green Fork has certified dozens of Memphis restaurants as sustainable, linking chefs with farmers and stimulating a vibrant local food community along the way. Running the culinary gamut from down-home Central BBQ to upscale Andrew Michael Italian Kitchen, the eateries are held to admirably high standards in sourcing and sustainability.

And there's no better setting for a grassroots revival. Memphis claims one of the largest urban parks in the country: the 4,500-acre Shelby Farms Park, with 6.5 miles of urban trails and a working farm. The Office of Sustainability supports the city's plans to expand the existing 35 miles of bike lanes to 85 miles and to build a greenway that will link Memphis with cities in Arkansas and Mississippi. “We get to innovate,” says city administrator Paul Young. It's a fitting description for Memphis. —Julie Schwieter Collazo

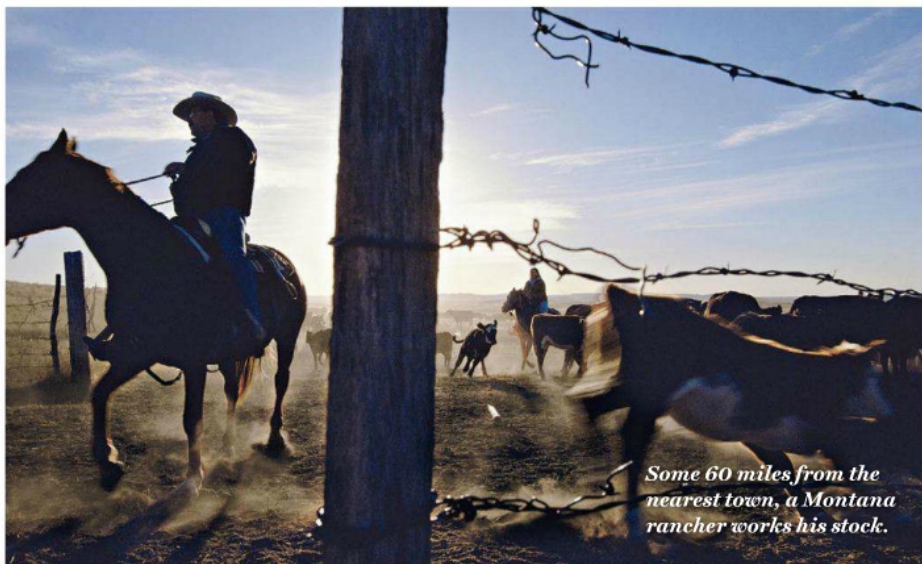
PLACE TO WATCH: LONDONDERRY (DERRY), NORTHERN IRELAND “In 2013, the U.K.'s inaugural City of Culture sets the stage for a celebration of culture, including the U.K.'s most prestigious contemporary art exhibition, the Turner Prize.” —Pat Riddell, *National Geographic Traveller UK*

JARASH

A Roman holiday in the Jordanian sands

A warm desert breeze whispers softly through Jarash's hundreds of Roman columns, the bruised and fallen, the proud and unbending alike. It swishes about the Oval Forum, witness to this city's ancient glory. Just 30 miles north of Jordan's capital, Amman, Jarash was a part of the Decapolis, a set of semiautonomous cities that stretched across the Levant. With the visit of Emperor Hadrian in A.D. 129, it became the temporary seat of an empire. A new city has arisen, but Jarash remains home to some of the best preserved Roman ruins in

the world. "The city was covered by sand for so many years. Today, you can still feel how these people lived," says tour guide Ayman Khattab. You can see the scars of chariots on the original stones along the Cardo Maximus. At the Hippodrome, you can almost hear the clash of gladiator battles. And at the South Theater, contemporary sounds emerge. Its annual summertime showcase of national and international music and poetry is Jordan's preeminent cultural event. A modern concert surrounded by these ancient stones deserves a standing ovation. —Benjamin Orbach



Some 60 miles from the nearest town, a Montana rancher works his stock.

MISSOURI RIVER BREAKS

Big sky, bigger adventures in Montana

Today Lewis and Clark wouldn't recognize most of their route from St. Louis to the Pacific. But there's one place they'd know in a heartbeat: a 149-mile stretch of the Missouri River in north-central Montana. It still contains the "scenes of visionary enchantment" the explorers found in 1805, where rugged sandstone canyons meet the river, then climb to a seemingly limitless prairie full of life. Bighorn sheep and elk sip from the

river while antelope scamper. Eagles scream, coyotes sing, and prairie dogs do that funky dance. Even bison are back, thanks to the American Prairie Reserve, a group stitching together three million acres of public and private land for wildlife.

For locals, this place where erosion slashes the prairie is simply "the Breaks." Some people explore it by canoe, often starting at Fort Benton (make time for the frontier history museums) and paddling for days and days.

Others keep their feet dry, but the one thing everybody can find is quiet, the kind of hush that amplifies birdsong, a flutter of leaf, the melody of wind, your own heartbeat.

It's not easy country. You'll find more cactus and prairie rattlesnakes than people. You'll expose yourself to weather that can peel your skin, freeze your flesh, bake you to the bone. Bring sturdy shoes, lots of water—and an open mind. In the Breaks, you can fill it with something good. —Scott McMillion

Towering giraffes.



UGANDA

Africa's new frontier

Uganda, once the cornerstone of Africa's Grand Tour, is today bypassed by most visitors. The nation and its people have been brutalized by dictators, battered by warlords, and negatively portrayed by viral videos. Safari-goers line up in next-door Kenya and Tanzania, with only a few coming to Uganda to see the famed mountain gorillas.

The land mixes savanna, enormous lakes, rain forests, and the glacier-clad Rwenzori Mountains, one of Africa's tallest ranges. The headwaters of the Nile originate here, then burst through a cleft in the rocks at Murchison Falls. Uganda's parade of animals is amazingly diverse. Hippos graze along the shores of Lake Edward in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, while lions lounge in the trees of Ishasha, in Queen Elizabeth National Park. The star in Bwindi is the mountain gorilla, a species down to about 720 animals visible in their tiny habitat.

Uganda has tough decisions ahead. Oil lies beneath the Rift Valley, right inside Murchison Falls National Park. Extraction seems inevitable. But tourism dollars could provide an easier coexistence between banana-loving gorillas and banana farmers in Bwindi. —David Swanson

More Online: Learn when to go, where to stay, and how to make the most of these 20 places at travel.nationalgeographic.com.

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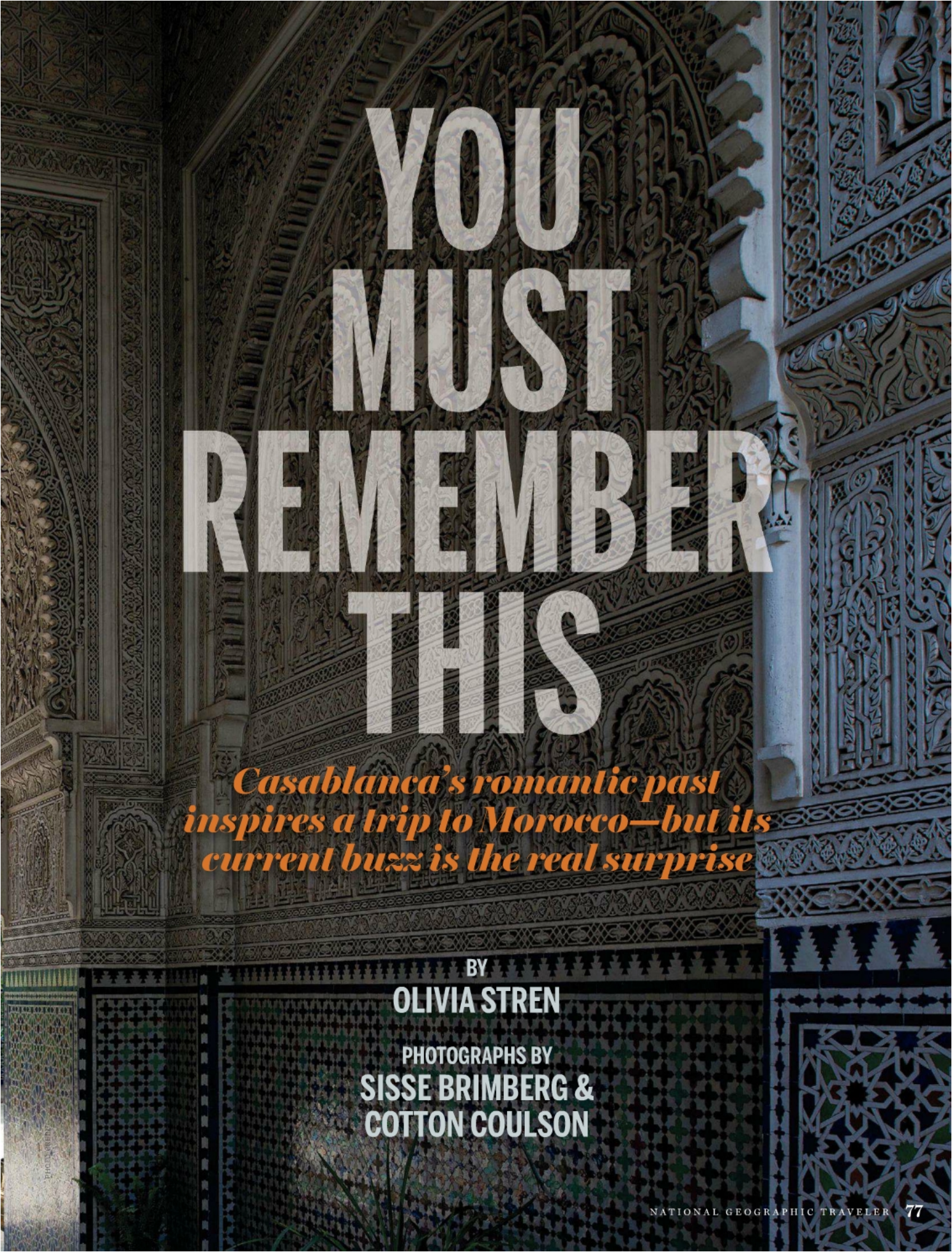
A portion of the proceeds from Geno 2.0 kit sales supports project research, as well as indigenous cultural conservation and revitalization through the Genographic Legacy Fund.

Photo credits: Randy Olson, David Evans

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Moorish arches and richly decorated walls distinguish the Mahkama du Pacha (Courthouse of the Pasha), which dates to the 1950s and today is a venue for official functions.





YOU MUST REMEMBER THIS

*Casablanca's romantic past
inspires a trip to Morocco—but its
current buzz is the real surprise*

BY
OLIVIA STREN

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
SISSE BRIMBERG &
COTTON COULSON

I HAVE LANDED IN THE PAGES OF AN F. SCOTT FITZGERALD NOVEL.

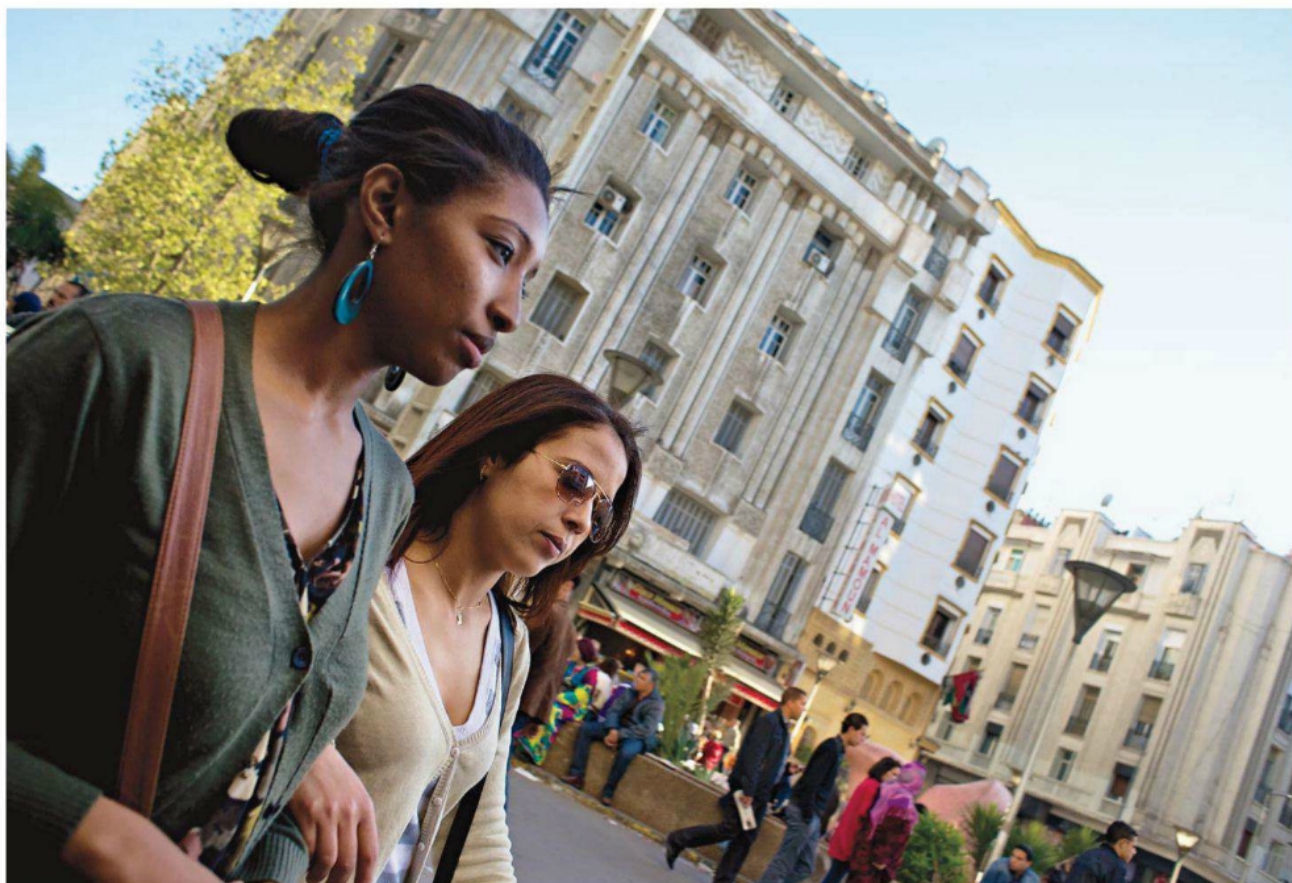
That thought hits me as we pull up to our hotel in Casablanca. One of this Moroccan city's newest lodgings, the Hôtel and Spa Le Doge occupies a 1930s mansion. Each of its suites is named and individually designed to honor a leading figure of the art deco epoch—Fitzgerald, Colette, Coco Chanel, Jean Cocteau. The bellhop escorts my mother and me up a winding, crimson-carpeted staircase and leads us to the Fritz Lang room, named for the director of the 1927 movie *Metropolis* and aptly adorned with cinema-style tripod floor lamps and walls painted a smart, filmstrip gray. The bellhop deposits our luggage, then turns toward my mother and, apropos of nothing, says: *"Vous avez le ciel et la lumière du Maroc dans les yeux, madame"*—You have the sky and the light of Morocco in your eyes, madam." My mother, her sky-and-light eyes now tearful, brings her hand to her chest and responds: *"Je suis Casablancaise. Et j'ai le Maroc dans mon coeur, monsieur"*—I am from Casablanca, and I have Morocco in my heart, sir."

Claude Stren, née Schétrit—my mother—was born in a taxicab in Casablanca in 1941, a year before the classic film *Casablanca* was released. To me, her early life seemed like a movie: glamorous in its

tumult. If Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman's *Casablanca*—filmed in studios in Burbank, California—was about longing and loss, my mother's Casablanca was too. Her Morocco, a country she was forced to abandon for political and religious reasons more than 50 years ago and has longed for ever since, instilled in me a yearning for a grander, more operatic life.

I was born the boring way, in a hospital, and grew up in safe, comfortable Toronto, with its grumpy, overcast skies, hearing about my mother's native city—its slicing light, its Ajax white buildings, its temperamental, wind-tousled Atlantic shores. For as long as I can remember, my mother and I talked about an idyllic someday when we would visit Casablanca. But she feared she would be returning to an unrecognizable city. So we let Casablanca flourish in the haze of fantasy—until my mom celebrated her big 70th birthday in 2011, and we finally booked the airline tickets.

"I am afraid of confronting the work of time," she admits to me somewhere above the Atlantic Ocean on the plane flight over. I do not tell her this, but I am feeling nervous too, that our high expectations will lead only to a letdown.



Place du 16 Novembre's 1930s art deco architecture (above) reflects France's design influence on Casablanca. An allée of palms (right) runs through Parc ISESCO, restored by and named for the Islamic Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization.





1. Tea, poured with precision, is a treat at the Hôtel and Spa Le Dôge. 2. Tiles artistically frame a doorway along the Rue du Parc. 3. Bazaar vendors chat in the Quartier des Habous. 4. Colorful tile details in Casablanca's Hassan II Mosque complex hint at the lavish decorations that embellish Morocco's largest religious structure. 5. Silver-trimmed, hand-painted tagine vessels are used to serve Morocco's traditional stews. 6. A woman rounds a corner in the Quartier des Habous, an area that was designed by French architects in 1917 to resemble a medina. 7. Savory Berber-style chicken tagine with olives is a popular menu item at Restaurant Zayna. 8. Grand doors at the Mahkama du Pacha lead to its courtly interior.



STANDING ON OUR HOTEL'S ROOFTOP TERRACE, we see Casablanca spread before us: 1930s-style town houses crowned with tropical gardens filled with lemon trees and trees that locals call *filles de l'air* (girls of the air), minarets pointing up to preposterously blue Moroccan skies the likes of which inspired Henri Matisse. But we also see grime-veiled apartment blocks with Berber rugs dangling over rust-scabbed balconies.

When the French established a protectorate in Morocco in 1912, they saw an opportunity for Casablanca to become the pinnacle of colonial achievement: a brand-new seaside fantasia of art deco and neo-Moorish architecture. Paris with palm trees. But the colonial government gave way to independence in 1956, and today Casablanca has a determinedly different character. Redolent of Havana or Buenos Aires, Morocco's most populous city has a splendor of bygone days.

Travelers in search of a mystical, snake-charming Morocco tend to relegate Casablanca to a night on the itinerary—a stopover en route to the imperial cities of Marrakech and Fès. Locals also sometimes deride Casa, as it's nicknamed, as a traffic-choked financial center.

But Casablanca native and Hôtel Le Doge owner Mounir Kouhen is one of a growing number of Moroccans who are committed to rehabilitating the city's reputation and architecture. He joins us on the rooftop, immaculately outfitted in a charcoal gray suit and pink tie. "We wanted to bring back Casablanca's artistic universe, its golden age," he says. "We took three years to renovate this building and quickly found its soul, its heart. Now it's ours to protect." He then adds, "Casa is different from other Moroccan cities. It spills over with energy." The sounds of horns interrupt him as if on cue. "This is the New York City of Morocco. But something that people may not know is that Casa is also a city beloved of Jacques Brel, of Édith Piaf."

"That is my Casa," my mother says. "That's the only one I know."

In search of Brel's and Piaf's Casa, we head to Villa Zévaco, in the city's chic Anfa district. Designed circa 1950 by the French-Moroccan architect Jean-François Zévaco, the villa gleams with white curving balconies and opens to a garden. Though it now houses Paul, a French pastry chain, the building seems the kind of glamorous retreat Piaf might have been drawn to during the times she spent in Casablanca to be with the love of her life, Algerian prizefighter Marcel Cerdan. Cerdan died in a plane crash in October 1949. About their love, Piaf composed the lyrics to her great warhorse song, "Hymne à l'Amour."

We ask for a coveted seat on the vast outdoor patio—the city's bourgeois brunch hub—which is decorated with wild palms and succulents. Morning sunshine filters through a tangle of silvery olive trees. Next to us, women with oversize sunglasses, designer purses, and French manicures compulsively check their BlackBerrys, while men in Adidas tracksuits and slicked hair sip mint tea and fidget with their iPads. I take a peek inside: Waiters in white caps glide along black marble floors ferrying trays of toasted baguettes, olive oil, and honey.

Inspired by the beauty of the modernist Zévaco building, I suggest a visit to the city's so-called art deco district.

"I have never heard of such a place," my mother comments, poorly concealing her irritation—as though its unfamiliarity, much like the women and their giant eyewear, was an act of betrayal, another way the city and its people have gotten along just fine without her.

"I'd be happy to explore that area," she says, "but first I need to find my apartment building. My neighborhood. If I don't find that building, I won't function."

So we hail a taxi to her old neighborhood. Or at least we attempt to hail one. After about 15 minutes of strategizing, staking out different street corners—Kouhen's Manhattan analogy is apt—we

are triumphant and are taken on a harrowing ride to the city's core.

If this is my mother's childhood stomping ground and the former center of *la nouvelle ville*, it's also, we quickly learn, the art deco district. "I lived in the heart of the art deco district without even knowing it!" my mother says, cheered by the discovery.

"I guess it wasn't called that when you lived here," I say, stating the obvious.

"No. It was just my neighborhood. It was beautiful, but I didn't think it was special; I thought the whole world looked like this," she answers as we pass Au Petit Poucet, a café where the French writer Antoine de Saint-Exupéry came for coffee. An aviator as well as a writer, Saint-Exupéry stopped regularly in Casablanca in the 1920s between flights across the Sahara to Dakar, Senegal.

The café reminds my mom of one of her favorite Saint-Exupéry quotes: *Je suis de mon enfance comme d'un pays*—I am from my childhood as from a country.

"He also said something like 'Childhood is a place, a republic,'" she adds. Then she says, "To me, not finding the country of your childhood is, in some ways, not finding your home or yourself."

"We'll find it," I reassure her.

The capital of her childhood country is the Boulevard de Paris, where she lived. "It was an address of 'grand standing,'" my mother tells me, becoming the proud little girl. However, her family was

far from wealthy (as a child, she suffered from rickets, a result of malnutrition), so she and her parents and sister made do in a tiny apartment in the back of a fashionable apartment building. On this Boulevard de Paris—once trimmed with café terraces and markets selling *jambon-et-saucisson* (ham and sausages)—young Claude dreamed of visiting the real Paris.

"I imagined it would be like Casablanca—sunny and beautiful—but with lovers sitting on benches and children sending paper boats to float in the Tuileries Garden." When she finally did visit Paris, with its iron skies and stubborn drizzle, she was disappointed. "I thought Paris would be paradise! Instead, in many ways, in Casablanca I had paradise under my nose."

Soon we come upon the Boulevard de Paris, hoping to discover at least one corner of that paradise. But it is grand only in recollection.

"This cannot be the boulevard!" my mother exclaims to me, almost angrily. "It's so small. The street is so narrow. It looks as if it was

made for elves. And it used to be so immaculate!"

Buildings once painted in sharp blues and whites now are dirty, peeling, some in a state of literal collapse. We walk up and down the block three times. My mother seems disoriented, unable to find any signposts of her former life. I begin to wonder if this trip was a mistake—recover-the-past rarely makes for a winning travel plan.

Then she looks up and gasps "Pharmacie Minuit!" This pharmacy was just steps from where she lived.

"The apartment must be here. I know it's here." She's right. A few steps away stands her building, but renumbered, scruffy, the color of car exhaust. We step into this tiny province of her childhood.

"Do you recognize it?" I ask her.

"Yes, but it used to be cared for," she says.

The building's inner courtyard, once lush with ivy, is bare, and flower beds, once tidy green quilts, are covered in concrete, making them look like children's tombstones.

"I remember standing in that corner of the courtyard," she tells me, pointing, "with my sister and parents during the war," referring to World War II. "We were afraid that if we stayed in our apartment the ceilings would collapse, so we huddled together trying to find safety from the bombardments. The sound of the breeze in the ivy scared me, but I pretended it didn't. I wanted to be brave." My mother was three, and if she barely knew her name, the Nazi-leaning Vichy

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FOR OUR
LAST NIGHT IN
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WE STUMBLE
INTO—OF ALL THE
GIN JOINTS IN
ALL THE WORLD—
RICK'S CAFÉ.

*A movie set comes to life at
Rick's Café, inspired by
the 1942 film Casablanca.*



government, she recalls, knew it, putting hers (along with the rest of her family's) on the lists of those bound for Nazi concentration camps. Then, the Americans docked in Casablanca.

"I still recall the sound of Champagne popping," she says of that happy night. "Uniformed soldiers, tall and handsome, gave us toy tanks and bars of Hershey's chocolate." She pauses, then adds, "And Lewis from Chicago, a soldier who was billeted with us, fell madly in love with my mother. Everybody did. She was beautiful."

In that night's delirium of relief and jubilation, my mother says, Lewis swept her up in his arms so she might touch the ceiling with her dimpled hand. In that little moment she felt joy was boundless. But today, we hear only the hollow sound of pigeons flapping overhead.

"All I see now is what I do not see," she says sadly, of Lewis, of her mother and father, of the neighbor she called Tata (for aunt), who taught her how to cook the fluffy couscous that made its way to our dinner table in Toronto.

Later that afternoon, her mood lifts as we play tourist and visit the spectacular Hassan II Mosque. Built on a promontory in homage to a Koranic verse stating that Allah's throne was built upon water, the mosque was commissioned by the late King Hassan II and inaugurated in 1993. Its 689-foot-high minaret is the tallest in the world and is bejeweled in tiles the colors of emeralds, sapphires, and tourmalines. We wander past fountains and under marble arches, then spot the El Hank lighthouse, just to the west along the shore. It is as plain in looks as the minaret is magnificent, but its ordinariness emanates a grandeur—of one that has witnessed and survived. It is the lighthouse that guided the Allies to Casablanca's shores.

"Unlike me, it hasn't changed. Not a wrinkle," my mother says as we sit atop the seawall, the waves below tossing themselves against rocky outcrops. "That lighthouse saved my life."

WE RETURN THE FOLLOWING DAY for a deeper look at the art deco district, on a tour led by Florence Michel-Guilluy, an art historian who has lived in Casablanca for the past five years and now works

with Casamémoire, a nonprofit heritage-preservation association. "Casa is an architectural laboratory set under an open sky," she says. "The remarkable thing is not only the diversity of the building styles but their coherence. Casablanca is a city that one must explore *le nez en l'air*"—nose in the air, looking up.

So, nez en l'air, we wander past the Cathédrale du Sacré Coeur, a confection white as whipped cream that was built in the 1930s. "What made Casablanca modern was the way it celebrated tradition," says Michel-Guilluy, noting the minaret-inspired steeples.

As we walk onto broad Place Mohammed V, Michel-Guilluy notes, "The best examples of Casablanca's golden age are found here." We stroll over to the adjacent Parc de la Ligue Arabe, lined with towering date palms, where my mother and her mother walked. Hemming the park are the city's main post office, built in 1918, with all the arches and vibrant mosaics of a Moorish palace, and the imposing Banque al-Maghrib, with its elaborately carved front. More arresting to me, however, are the details that dress ordinary apartment buildings here: seashells carved into stone facades, Italianate balconies, green-and-gilt peacocks decorating wrought iron doors.

Anita Leurent, who recently moved from France to Casablanca, has joined our tour.

"In Casa, beauty is not served up to you as it is in other places. You must seek it out. Here, you are a treasure hunter, a *chercheur d'or*—gold seeker. That is what is thrilling!"

We pause at a 1930s town house, windows framed with plasterwork as delicate as lace.

"There is always a detail, a secret to discover here," says Leurent.

In the meantime, I am also discovering family lore. As we walk down Boulevard Mohammed V, my mother remarks that the street's monarchical namesake was fond of my grandmother.

"What do you mean? King Mohammed knew her?"

"Oh, yes. She was his manicurist in the 1930s. And she was very attractive, so he was naturally quite taken with her. He asked her to marry him."

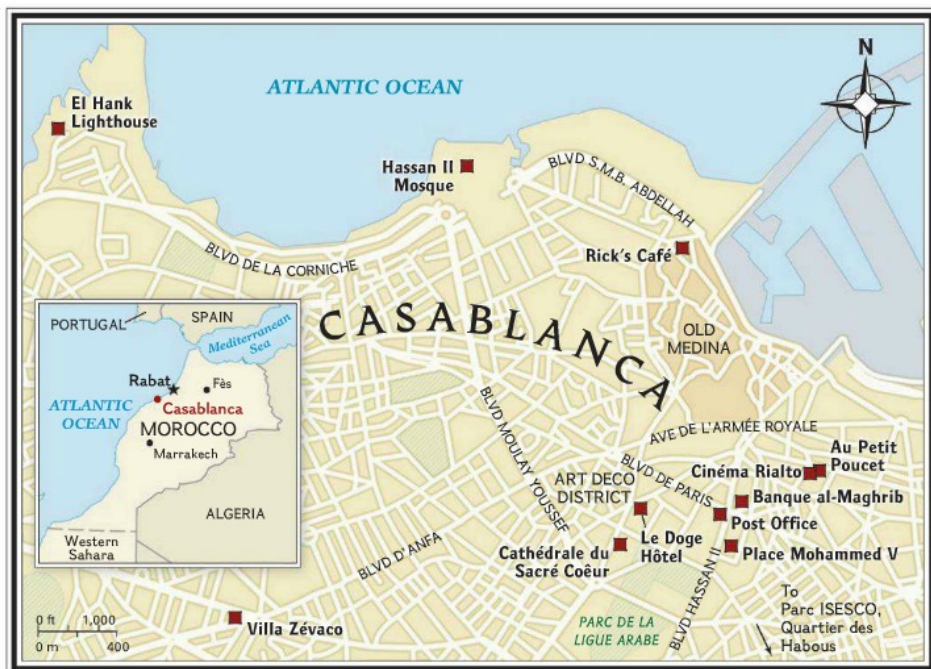
"And she said no? To the king's proposal of marriage?" I exclaim.

"Well, would you want to live in a harem?" she replies. Fair enough.

After my grandmother's stint as the king's manicurist, she worked as a ticket seller at the old Cinéma Triomphe, one of numerous movie theaters in Casablanca. Hollywood had its golden age at the same time Casablanca did—they both were optimistic, hedonistic towns that turned on sea, sunshine, and cinema. In a place so entwined with its Hollywood incarnation, it is fitting that movie theaters should serve as landmarks. We decide to visit the best preserved and most striking example: the Cinéma Rialto, where Josephine Baker once sang her big hit, "*J'ai Deux Amours*." Recently repainted and renovated, the Rialto hints at a Casablanca comeback.

We curl onto a side street near the theater and stop for a mint tea at an outdoor café, where locals—some in jeans and Nikes, some in djellabas and the slipper-like shoes called babouches—sit on cane-back

**"IN CASA,
BEAUTY IS NOT
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chairs under ceiling fans whirling with the languor of dissipating smoke rings, and tuck into chicken and lamb tagines and frosty local beer. In establishments such as these, my mother tells me, people used to lunch on grilled locusts—a delicacy during locust invasions—and Orangina.

By the café, I notice vendors ladling steaming bowlfuls of snails from massive cauldrons alongside bookstores selling folio editions of French classics. In these contrasts, I recognize my mother. Like her city, she is made up of Occident and Orient, of mismatched parts and various lives. I came to Casablanca to discover her haunts; I didn't expect to find her so vividly reflected in them. She is more like her Casablanca than I'd imagined. Maybe it's ancestral, but I, too, feel a visceral affinity to and intimacy with the country—its colors, its flavors (everything spiked with mint and coriander and orange water), even its pace, which tends to be at once lively and languid. In this, Morocco's Manhattan, locals rush to cafés—only to while away the afternoon there sipping tea.

ON OUR LAST NIGHT IN CASABLANCA we stumble into—of all the gin joints in all the world—Rick's Café. Housed in an old mansion and built into the walls of Casablanca's old medina neighborhood, which overlooks the port, Rick's is a universe of Arab arches, tassel-fringed brass lamps, and potted palms. Dangling Moroccan lanterns spend their night sending shivering shadows onto white walls, while a bartender in a burgundy fez mixes cocktails behind a bar. Visiting European ambassadors sip Champagne and dig into golden hillocks of couscous. Here, Rick is Kathy Kriger, who opened this saloon in 2004. (Like the movie Rick, she lives upstairs.)

"I wanted to bring the screen legend to life in Casablanca," she

tells us. Kriger moved to the city in 1998 to serve as the commercial counselor at the U.S. Consulate. "I fell in love with the architecture here," she says. "Then, a day after September 11, 2001, I decided to quit my government job and open Rick's. It was the gamble of a lifetime. I put everything I had into this place. I like to say that my budget exceeded that of the film's by about \$50,000."

My mother and I order a pair of pastis aperitifs as a four-piece band begins to play Charles Trénet's 1940s tune "*Que Reste-t-il de Nos Amours?*" ("What Remains of Our Loves?"). The nostalgic chanson—about lost youth and young love—could serve as both Casablanca's anthem and the theme song to my mother's journey.

"Are you happy we finally came?" I ask her, risking hearing an honest answer.

"Yes," she replies. "Casa is more decrepit, sadder, but also more beautiful than I remember." She stops to listen to the snowy-haired saxophonist who, I later find out, accompanied Édith Piaf at her last concert at Paris's Olympia music hall.

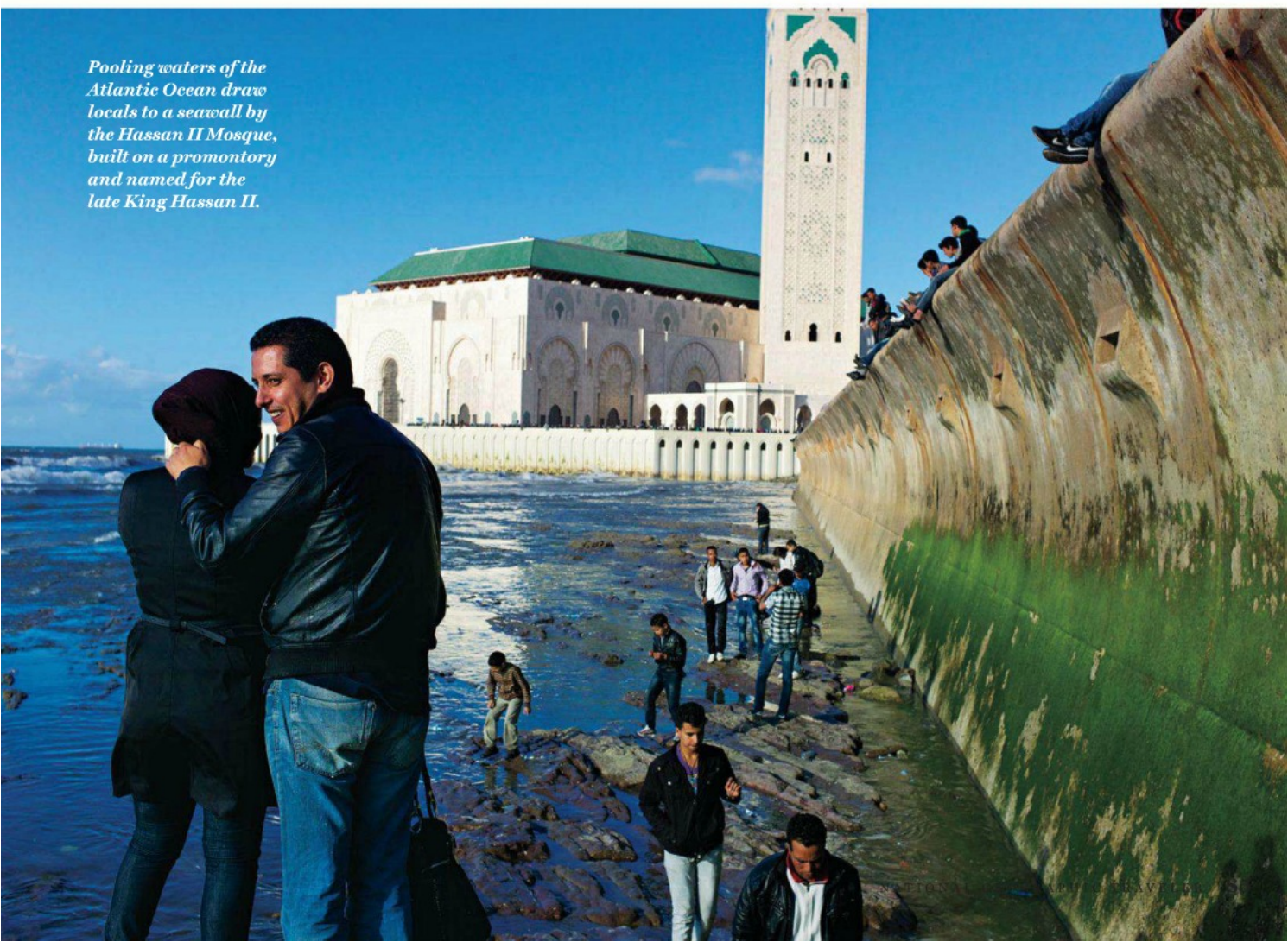
It's almost midnight when we leave Rick's, knowing we're flying home early the next morning.

"I wish I could pack a little corner of Casa to bring back with me to Toronto," my mother says, already nostalgic for the city that knew her when life unspooled freshly ahead—at a moment when her life stretches largely behind her.

"Who needs luggage?" I reply. "You're already storing the sky and light in your eyes."

Toronto-based **OLIVIA STREN** has written for *Elle* and the *Globe and Mail*. Copenhagen-based photographers **SISSE BRIMBERG** and **COTTON COULSON** shot "*From Russia With Love*" (October 2012).

Pooling waters of the Atlantic Ocean draw locals to a seawall by the Hassan II Mosque, built on a promontory and named for the late King Hassan II.





* FIRST ANNUAL *

Traveler *of the* Year

THESE PASSIONATE NOMADS INSPIRE
US ALL TO TAKE ON THE WORLD

BY George W. Stone

*Learning curve:
Paula Busey and
Samwel Melami,
photographed in
Colorado, launched
a cultural exchange.*

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Travel can change the world. *Travelers of the Year* is our inaugural celebration of amazing individuals who explore the world with passion and purpose. We sifted through hundreds of nominations to pick boundary-breaking, world-shaking people on innovative missions. Each of these dedicated voluntourists, green-minded adventurers, and culture-embracing pilgrims reminds us that we have the power to reach beyond the bubble of our daily lives, learn from locals in far-flung places, and make a difference both around the world and in our own neighborhoods. Congratulations to these visionary globe-trotters who inspire us to expand our horizons, ask big questions, and seek new answers.



ON THE ROAD

Theron Humphrey documents the oral histories of everyday Americans

THE NUMBERS ALONE are astonishing—365 days and some 66,000 miles logged on the road, 90,000 photos snapped, 50 states visited. And the cause is inspiring. **Theron Humphrey** took a year to see America and record the story of one person in film and audio each day. This storyteller's monumental road trip echoes the Depression-era Federal Writers Project, a W.P.A. initiative that recorded the life stories of some 10,000 people. But Humphrey's oral history enterprise is rooted in a more personal motive: "I got stirred up and wanted to live a different life. I wanted to discover new things and meet new people," says 29-year-old Humphrey, who quit his job as a fashion studio photographer and hit the highway in August 2011 with a mission of befriendng one person each day, every day, for a year and documenting that person's life story. The result is a personal journey published online at thiswildidea.com, a site supported by \$15,000 collected from 142 angel investors on the fund-raising platform Kickstarter. Like a Beat poet for the social media era, Humphrey maps out his route and shares the tales of the people he's met along the way. There's Liz Roma, a farmer in Vermont. Andy Irvin, a fly fisherman in Tennessee. Spoda, a New Mexico vagabond. Uncle Bobby, a Hawaiian canoe craftsman. And Patrick Millard, a Pittsburgh artist, who unexpectedly died a few days after the interview. Humphrey's "wild idea" was reinforced by an audio interview he did with his grandfather in North Carolina. "When my granddad died, I thought to myself, 'Here I am, shooting catalog photos of handbags made in China. But what if I traveled across the country and struck up conversations with everyday people? And what if we all had a recorded story we could pass on?'" Humphrey's histories document the tenor of our times, spoken by the people who populate a traveler's landscape and framed by a photographer with an eye for detail. "It's in the American DNA to seek new ideas," says Humphrey. "That's what drove me."



KID VIDEO

A Manhattan high-schooler brings off-the-rails adventure to a new generation

EVERY TRAVELER KNOWS that learning the local lingo is part of the pleasure of getting to know a new place. But *frontside lipslide... backside crooked-grind... kickflip*? What language is this? It's the lingua franca of the skateboarding world, an international language that has permitted 15-year-old **Booker Mitchell** to take his homemade travel show to Spain, Nicaragua, and the Brazilian Amazon. With the help of his filmmaker mom and support of his dad, Mitchell scripts and stars in an unconventional Web video series that reveals the world through the eyes and experiences of young people. *BookerTravels.com* tracks its gregarious star as he navigates foreign lands by skateboarding and surfing with local kids. "Travel shows for grown-ups have these really excited hosts who talk about museums," says Booker. "Our motto is 'Live Life Outside,' and we're trying to show how young people really live." Web episodes follow Booker as he rolls through new worlds, drumming up spontaneous friendships and discovering the music, art, food, and geography of foreign lands. Although she's a documentarian, Brazil-born Tânia Cypriano is far from a stage mom. "Ever since he was little, Booker kept journals. Wherever we traveled, I took videos. One day we realized we were documenting the world as a kid experiences it." The multilingual tenth-grade host, who lives in New York City, plans the trips and keeps journals. A surfing safari in Popoyo, Nicaragua, uncovers remote reefs and cattle traffic jams. A trip to Barcelona's Gothic Quarter turns up delicious *bocadillos* (sandwiches) made on a 60-year-old press that Booker describes as "ancient." And a Brazilian expedition reveals something more. "You wouldn't expect anyone in the Amazon to know how to skate. Most people think of jungles and piranhas. But I made friends and realized that even in the middle of nowhere, kids live the same way I do. Lesson learned: Always bring my board with me!"



Hang time: Theron Humphrey in Hawaii

SUSAN SEIBERT (THERON HUMPHREY), DAVID ROMANOFF (PAULA BUSBY AND SAMUEL MELAM), PRECEDING PAGE, RAYMOND PATRICK (BOOKER MITCHELL, OPPOSITE PAGE)

*Street-savvy star:
Manhattan teen
Booker Mitchell
hosts a kid-focused
travel series.*





LEAPS AND BOUNDS

A Canadian family finds that a passport is the ticket to go and grow

MORE THAN A YEAR AGO, my husband and I yanked our two sons away from everything they knew and headed out to discover the planet,” says **Heather Greenwood Davis**, a 40-year-old travel writer who chronicled her family’s round-the-world journey at globetrottingmama.com. “The goal was to show our kids that their neighborhood wasn’t limited to their block, that the world has more to offer than PlayStation 3, and that people are way more interesting than they could imagine.” From their home in Ontario, the Davis gang (father Ish, age 45, and boys Ethan, 10, and Cameron, 8) embarked on an epic journey. They came face to face with bears in British Columbia, blue-footed boobies in the Galápagos, pandas in China, and zebras in Namibia. They watched World Cup rugby in New Zealand, went *tuk-tuk* riding in Cambodia, and checked in on checkers matches in Dar es Salaam. They toured an orphanage in Argentina, observed evening prayers in India, and encountered revolutionary times in Egypt. All told, the Davis family spent 12 months on the road, visited 29 countries, and

blogged about their adventure along the way. Social media was more than a useful tool; it was a lifeline that enabled the family to keep in touch with home and connect with locals wherever they went. Ethan and Cameron kept up with math, reading, and writing skills online and Skyped with their friends while their parents tweeted and updated their Facebook page. “Over time, we learned that *not* staying in touch was equally important,” says Davis, noting that time away from life’s digital ping enabled the family to engage with their immediate surroundings. This fall, the boys returned to school in Toronto with broader horizons. While their grand tour may be unconventional, it’s not impossible. “We’re not a rich family, and this did not make us any richer,” says Davis, who estimates that the trip cost roughly \$150,000 (half spent on airfare). “But you never have money and time at the same time. This was the right year for us. Our kids came away with a sense that the planet is a kind place, that the world is accessible to them, and that they can befriend people everywhere they go. It was an amazing year.”



*Masked explorers:
The Toronto-based
Davis family took a
year to see the world.*



*Creative loafer:
Nadezhda Savova.*

ALL YOU KNEAD IS LOVE

*Traveling grad student Nadezhda Savova
bakes up cross-cultural connections*

TRAVEL HAS TAUGHT ME that the best things that happen to us are those we never planned for or could even imagine," says 29-year-old **Nadezhda Savova**. When she inherited her great-grandmother's crumbling house in Gabrovo, in her native Bulgaria, the budding anthropologist turned a burden into an opportunity. She organized a team of local volunteers and rebuilt the structure into a community-owned Bread House and Cultural Center where neighbors could come to bake loaves, share stories, and form friendships. The project was such a success that the peripatetic Princeton Ph.D. student (she's traveled to 76 countries) has since established similar programs in a dozen countries, from Israel to Brazil, Russia, South Korea, and the U.S. While on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, Savova learned that the name Bethlehem means "house of bread"; she perceived that bread is a common denominator. "In my travels, I've always been drawn to bakeries. They help me feel the spirit of a place and get to know its culture, from street chapati vendors in India to injera home-baking in Ethiopia and tortilla-making in Mexico. I realized that learning to bake could be a way to engage people and creatively connect locals. Making bread is extremely low-cost and merely takes time, creating the perfect opportunity to talk, listen, and learn. By breaking bread with people of all walks of life, even feuding groups could come together." The Bread Houses Network (breadhousesnetwork.org) has evolved into

a community-development model that does not require dedicated space; any school, church, bakery, or home with an oven can serve as a venue for encouraging interreligious dialogue and cooperation among different generations and ethnic groups. "One of my favorite exchanges was in Cape Town," says Savova. "An elderly white man and a young black orphan, who otherwise would never meet, laughed, joked, and baked for hours. In a short time, they formed a fascinating relationship, almost like grandparent to grandchild."



HOPE FLOATS

*Around Australia in a rubber dinghy?
Meet a Tasmanian rebel with a cause*

DEEP SEA CAVES, towering cliffs, migrating whales: Tasmania's rugged beauty sets the perfect stage for ecotourism and creates the ideal platform for philanthropy, as one fearless fund-raiser sees it. Tour operator **Robert Pennicott** is proud of his custom-built yellow boats, which ply the pristine waters of Bruny and Tasman Islands. But the 47-year-old former fisherman is prouder still of the coastal conservation fund he co-founded in 2007; in its first year, it saved some 50,000 seabirds from the depredations of feral cats. That initial success turned the founder of Pennicott Wilderness Journeys into a daringly innovative philanthropist. In 2011, he launched a charitable foundation (pennicottfoundation.org.au) and led the first-ever circumnavigation of Australia by rubber dinghy to raise money for conservation and polio eradication. The journey took 101 days, raised nearly \$300,000 for polio vaccinations, and proved that clever risks can produce great rewards. "When I die, I want to have made a difference in the world," says Pennicott, who dedicates at least a quarter (and up to 85 percent, some years) of his annual profits to conservation and humanitarian issues. "Every little bit helps, and a lot of little contributions add up to make a big difference," he says. Pennicott will soon bring his polio philanthropy to Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Nigeria, the last three countries where the disease remains endemic. His next project is closer to home: He's working to help rid the ocean of floating plastic detritus. "The scale of this problem is enormous," he says. "The average seabird has 30 pieces of plastic in its digestive system. About 100,000 marine animals and a million seabirds each year are killed after ingesting or being entangled in plastics. The vortex of plastic off the coast of California is twice the size of Texas—and growing." How can travelers help? By choosing responsible, charitable tour operators and investing in their conservation efforts. "Wherever you go, support companies that have good ethics and sustainability practices," says Pennicott. His other piece of advice: "Live your dreams, and don't take no for an answer."



*Coastal crusader:
Robert Pennicott,
in Tasmania.*



DIVING IN

With an open spirit and an empty nest, Linda Yuen plunges into travel

WHEN I WAS IN HIGH SCHOOL in Lipue, Hawaii, my dream was to sail around the Pacific," says **Linda Yuen** from her home in Honolulu. But in the early 1940s, with a world at war and a father who hailed from Hiroshima, a holiday cruise to Tahiti was not an option. So Yuen went to college, married a marine biologist, and raised a family. With the exception of long weekends on nearby islands, family trips to national parks, and an extended jaunt to Europe, travel was mostly a dream deferred for the school social worker. But something changed as Yuen approached 60: Her curiosity about terra incognita became a passion for seeing the world. She became a part-time travel planner, helping others fill their passports and gaining access to discounted trips. Then Yuen packed her suitcase. She cruised to Pacific ports—Tahiti, Bora-Bora, Moorea, Easter Island. She explored the Galápagos. She toured Australia and snorkeled the Great Barrier Reef. She hiked the Milford Track in New Zealand. She took a New Year's Eve cruise to Antarctica.

She trekked around the safari lands of Africa and ambled across the cold coasts of Nova Scotia. She visited Machu Picchu. She followed the Silk Route across China *twice*. And she fell in love with Bhutan, a Himalayan kingdom that cast such a powerful spell Yuen has now visited three times to catch the black-necked crane migration in the Phobjikha Valley and study the rich culture's Buddhist traditions. She's particularly taken with the Gross National Happiness index that Bhutan's former king introduced as a measure of the quality of life on a holistic scale. "Discovering antiquity and imagining the people who have lived in places around the world is what keeps me traveling," says the 85-year-old. "I'm interested in archaeology, anthropology, geography, psychology, history—everything is interesting to me." Sometimes Yuen coaxes her husband along on trips; other times her globe-trotting friends tag along. No matter how far she travels or how exotic her destination seems, she never feels alone. "I get captured by places, and I carry them with me."



*Global immersion:
After retiring,
Oahu-based Linda
Yuen embraced her
buoyant passion for
seeing new places.*



Hydro hero: Amy Russell, on the road in Mozambique, is walking for water.



WALK THE TALK

This bucket-list journey is a continent-length trek to raise money for clean water

WHEN TRAVELERS SPEAK of doing the Cape-to-Cairo route, one thing is certain: They're not talking about walking it. But at this very moment, a pair of mission-minded adventurers are hoofing the 7,000-mile stretch from South Africa to Egypt to raise awareness and funds for Charity: Water, a non-profit organization that delivers clean water to people in developing nations. **Amy Russell**, the 24-year-old ringleader of Walking4Water, a crew that includes her teammate Aaron Tharp and a U.S.-based support network, admits to being a bit crazy but argues that her two-year adventure is the most direct way to document the effect that clean water can have on remote communities and encourage philanthropy that benefits some of the 800 million people on the planet who don't have access to safe water. Blogging the whole way, Russell captures the expedition's highs and lows at walking4water.org, defining ways to make compassion count and musing on everything from off-the-map adventures to back-and-forth border

crossings, obscure local languages, even more obscure cuisine, the African perspective on the AIDS crisis, and the men who propose marriage along the way. "When you travel, it's easy to have a temporary mind-set because you don't stay long in one place," says Russell. "But I think travelers should be advocates. If you see a situation that needs help, get involved with an organization that gives voice to the people you met. When you let your travel experiences change you and return home with your new mind-set intact, you'll be a better person for it, and in turn create a better world everywhere you go in the future." This isn't the group's first geographical journey; training missions included a march across Connecticut and a ramble from San Francisco to Los Angeles. Progress in Africa is slow along the route from Cape Town through Lesotho, Swaziland, Mozambique, Malawi, Tanzania, Kenya, Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt. The mission expects to roll into Cairo in 2014. If fortune smiles on them, two tall glasses of clean drinking water will be waiting.

Travelers of the Year Advisers: Jean Case CEO, Case Foundation • Russell Mittermeier president, Conservation International • Angélique Kidjo Grammy-winning singer, Batonga Foundation founder, UNICEF goodwill ambassador • Kumi Naidoo international executive director, Greenpeace • Jim Benning and Mike Yessis co-founders/editors of Worldhum.com • Jonathan Tourtellot National Geographic fellow, Center for Sustainable Destinations • Catherine Karnow contributing photographer, National Geographic Traveler • The editors of National Geographic Traveler

✧ CLASS ACT

Armed with an iPad and a drive to connect kids, this Maryland teacher is wired to the world

TEACHERS OFTEN TELL STUDENTS to “think global, act local.” After eight years as an educator at Garrison Forest School in Owings Mills, Maryland, **Diana Gross** decided to take that aphorism out for a spin. In late 2011, she embarked on a yearlong leave of absence with a globe-spanning goal of digitally connecting students and teachers by bringing technology education and mobile video training to underserved communities. It was a whizbang tour for the 42-year-old Traveling Teacher (travelingteacherblog.com). Gross formed a blogging connection between her Maryland students and their counterparts in a Moscow K-12. She took the Trans-Siberian railway to Ulaanbaatar, where she organized a groundbreaking Skype session between Mongolian and American students. “The Mongolian students were eager to debunk the stereotype that all Mongolians are nomadic and stuck in the past. They want to be known as modern and thriving,” says Gross, who helped her class broadcast that message. Her primary project was developing her “Tell Your Own Story” workshops—mobile media production courses focused on photo, video, and blogging—which she taught in Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar, and Malaysia. A few months after her first workshop, a Cambodian boy told Gross, “Teacher, you have showed us the future. None of us want to go backward. We all want to go forward.” Along with his friends, the boy later applied for and won a \$10,000 grant to fund a nascent media production lab. With her mission now extended for another year, the Traveling Teacher works from her home base in Siem Reap to advance her Southeast

Asia projects while raising funds to bring her 21st-century tech curriculum to Africa and the Middle East. To her surprise, she’s discovered that access to computers is not the primary issue facing underserved communities. “I’ve seen fully equipped, yet unused, computer labs in Mongolia, Cambodia, and Myanmar. The problem is that this foreign aid gift came without an adequate educational counterpart. But with effective training and low-cost mobile devices such as the iPad and Flip camera, it’s possible to teach basic social media skills and enable remote communities to go online, share their voices, and join the global discussion.” Who better than a traveling teacher to help a new generation of international Internet users share their stories one byte at a time? “Never before in my life have I felt that I was doing exactly what I am meant to be doing,” says Gross. “It’s as if everything I’ve ever done up until this point was preparing me for this work. It’s not always easy to be traveling, but right now, I couldn’t be happier.”

*Special delivery:
Kelley Rea and
Mary Jean Jecklin.*



✧ THE GIVING TREE

This couple packs a lot into trips—books, toys, and medical supplies for kids in need

SOMETIMES A GENEROUS HEART is not enough. “When you’re traveling in the developing world, you meet so many needy people. You truly want to help, but you don’t know how,” says **Mary Jean Jecklin**, a 65-year-old retired teacher and writer who lives in Sarasota, Florida. “But with a little planning, travelers can give something of value wherever they go and enjoy a deeper level of engagement with the promise of a positive outcome.” Through their website PACforKids.com, Jecklin and her 68-year-old husband, **Kelley Rea**, help travelers identify how, why, where, and what to give to needy children in developing countries. Their advice comes from a wealth of experience. Over a period of four decades, the couple have visited more than 50 countries, touring and working in Laos, Cambodia, Morocco, Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa, and Mexico, among others. Connecting well-intentioned donors with worthy recipients became their personal mission. “Responsible giving can be a one-on-one experience that everyone can have, and you don’t have to be rich or famous to do it,” says Jecklin. PACforKids helps travelers connect with worthy organizations such as orphanages, schools, and aid groups, to schedule a visit. The site also offers guidelines for useful, appropriate items—books, clothing, medical supplies, toys—to take or buy on-site. The result is mutually beneficial: Travelers help local children and experience a small slice of life from their perspective. “It’s not just that you’re a do-gooder for someone else,” says Jecklin. “You feel a personal reward yourself.”

RAYMOND PATRICK (DIANA GROSS), PETER BAKER (MARY JEAN JECKLIN AND KELLEY REA)



*Film schools:
Diana Gross.*

Jump-start: Samwel Melami shares his Maasai heritage with Colorado kids.



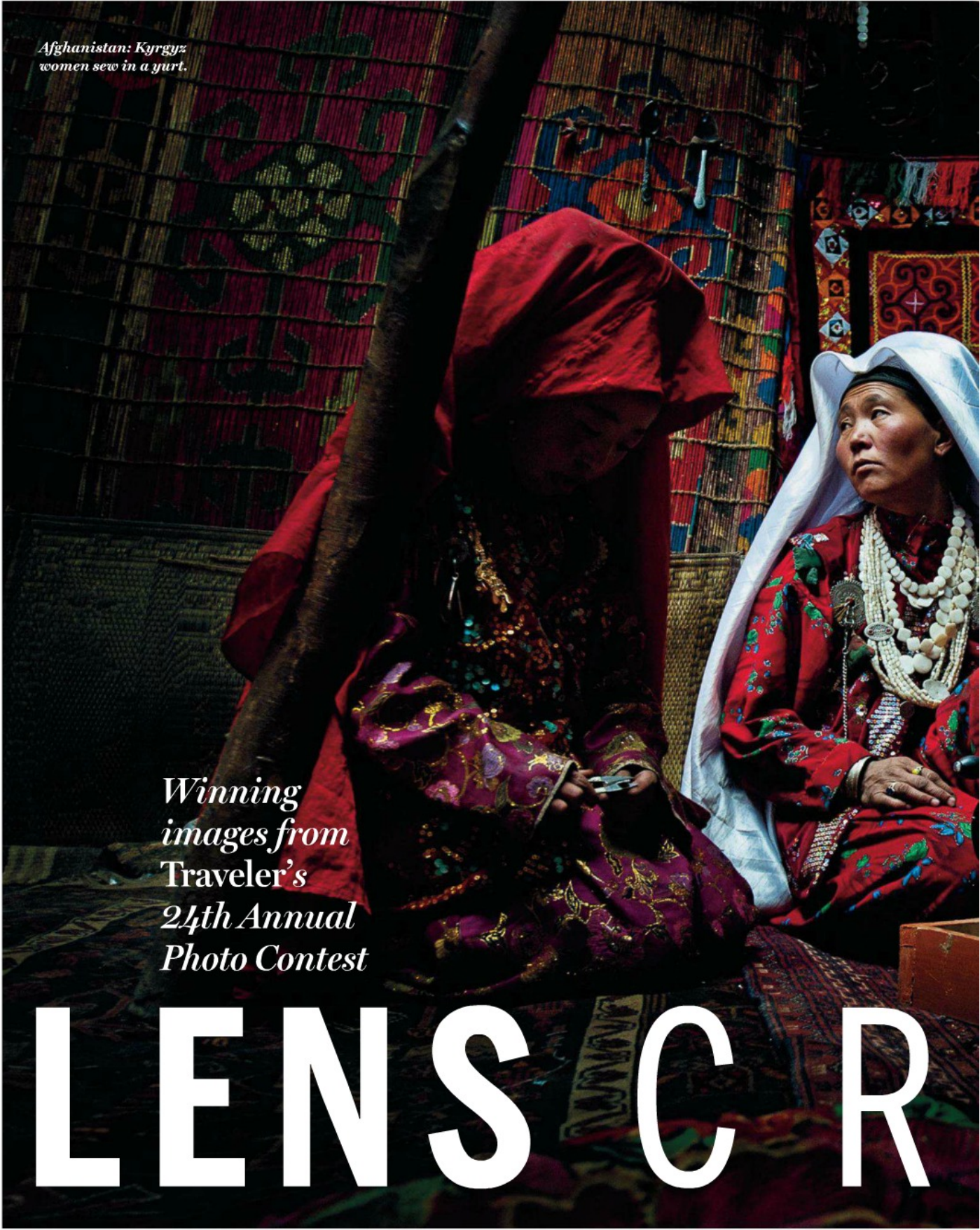
AFRICAN STARS

A Maasai warrior and a Denver educator bring the Serengeti to the suburbs

HOW DID A MAASAI WARRIOR with a magnetic personality, a command of five languages, and aspirations to become an ecotourism leader in his native Tanzania wind up teaching teens in the Rockies? Ask the librarian, **Paula Busey**. In 2009, Busey and her family headed out on safari in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area. Although it was her first trip to the continent, the sights and sensations felt familiar. “A lot of people go to Africa and feel that they’re home—I’m one of them,” she says. As her companions trained their cameras on megafauna, 55-year-old Busey found herself drawn to the Serengeti’s human population, particularly to her guide, **Samwel Melami Langidare Mollel**, a 30-year-old university-educated wildlife expert. “It was magical to learn about his life—about growing up in a village of 65 people, about Maasai traditions, and about his drive to study ecology and tourism and to launch his own ecotourism company,” she recalls. “As an educator, I wanted my students to have a first-person experience like this.” Back home in Littleton, a Denver suburb haunted by a high school shooting and rattled by last summer’s gun violence in nearby Aurora, Busey saw an opportunity to give her students an eye-opening encounter. “The students in my school refer to their world as ‘the Highlands Ranch bubble.’ I thought that Samwel could offer them the kind of experiential learning kids crave and a chance to identify with someone from a very different culture.” Through craft sales and fund drives, Busey

raised enough money to bring Melami to the States. Soon after, the man she had befriended in the Great Rift Valley stepped into her high school wrapped in a crimson *shúkà* and bedecked in bright beaded jewelry. A cultural exchange had come full circle, and it had only begun. Over five days, Melami taught some 1,500 Thunder-Ridge High students lessons in wildlife conservation, ethnobotany, tribal traditions, and African development. Those students returned the favor by raising funds to build a kitchen for a school near Arusha, where Melami lives. He made a second tour in 2011 with an expanded itinerary that included teaching at six area schools. “To see kids’ worlds expanding is the reason teachers go into this field,” says Busey. Melami agrees. “Traveling is a way of discovering another world and people,” he says, adding that his goal is to highlight the importance of preserving communities and traditions, whether in the Serengeti or in Colorado. “American kids are obsessed with becoming adults, with finishing university and starting to work,” says Melami. “I understand that they have anxieties. But I tell them the Maasai don’t think about tomorrow. We just try to make today excellent. And if today is excellent, tomorrow will come.”

Bonus Digital Features: Read extended interviews with our Travelers of the Year, see additional photos, and learn about some of the most important travelers in history at travel.nationalgeographic.com.



*Afghanistan: Kyrgyz
women sew in a yurt.*

*Winning
images from
Traveler's
24th Annual
Photo Contest*

LENS CR



More than 12,000 images by 6,615 photographers living in 152 countries vied for prizes in our 24th annual photo contest. The winning shots, judged by our panel of photography experts, were taken in a striking range of places—Myanmar, Fiji, Italy—and depict everything from romantic landscapes to everyday chores. What they all capture: the power of places and cultures to transform travel into a profound experience.

1ST PLACE

Afghanistan
CÉDRIC HOUIN

Cédric Houin, who carries Canadian and French citizenship, shot this image while traveling with a friend in the Wakhan Mountains area of Afghanistan, which has been spared the conflicts of the war and the Taliban regime. The pair trekked from the Hindu Kush to the Himalaya to document the nomadic Kyrgyz people. In Houin's photograph, a Kyrgyz mother, wearing a white veil, and her daughter pause while sewing. Visible behind them are devices that connect them with the modern world, including a sound console. "The intimacy of the moment, shot inside a family yurt, is in complete contrast with the harsh environment that these nomadic tribes inhabit," says Houin. "Kyrgyz tribes live weeks away from any village. But even though they are at an altitude of 4,300 meters (14,100 feet) in one of the most rugged, remote parts of Afghanistan, they have cell phones, solar panels, and satellite dishes." Drawn to extreme journeys, Houin has traveled in Tajikistan, Algeria, Chile, Indonesia, Turkey, and Iceland. His next project will focus on the question of what it takes to become a man. (Nikon D3 camera, Nikkor 14-24 mm f/2.8 lens at 24 mm, exposure at 1/125 second, f/5.6, ISO 500) Prize: Ten-day Galápagos Photography Expedition for two courtesy of National Geographic Expeditions



Vietnam: Children loft balloons into a soft fog.

2ND PLACE

Moc Chau, Vietnam
VO ANH KIET

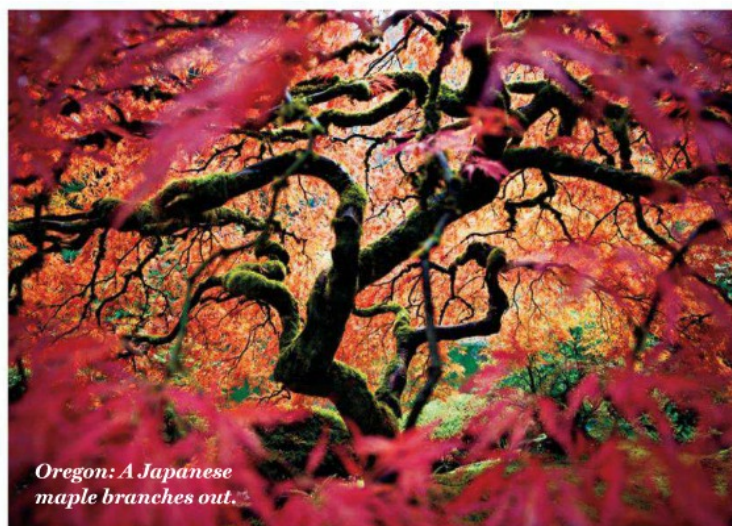
In early 2012, Vo Anh Kiet, a retired information technologies professional who lives in Ho Chi Minh City (formerly known as Saigon), traveled to north Vietnam to photograph the spring cherry blossoms. On the morning of his arrival in Moc Chau, a rural district in the remote Son La Province bordering Laos, fog blanketed the landscape. "As I entered a village called Pa Co, I came across the Hmong children playing with balloons," Kiet says. He was entranced by the unexpected beauty of the scene and took many photos, including this evocative image. Kiet, who started studying photography when he joined the South Vietnamese Army in the 1970s, says his favorite images are "of activities of life in the world." He would like

to travel around Vietnam and document the simple roadside barbershops where ordinary Vietnamese people go to get their hair cut. "I'm afraid that these 'pavement barbershops' are becoming part of history," he explains, citing the urbanization and development that have been taking place in his homeland. He also wants to return to the area around Moc Chau, which he has visited only in springtime, to see what it is like during the autumn harvest season. (Canon EOS 5D Mark II camera, Canon EF 24-70 mm f/2.8 lens at 70 mm, exposure at 1/125 second, f/3.5, ISO 200) Prize: 2½-day photography course courtesy of Santa Fe Workshops

3RD PLACE

Sicily, Italy
ANDREA GUARNERI

Although Andrea Guarneri lives in Palermo, Sicily, he had never witnessed the



Oregon: A Japanese maple branches out.

Processione dei Misteri, or Procession of the Mysteries, in the nearby town of Trapani. "It's an ancient procession of religious devotion that takes place during Easter," Guarneri explains. For the procession, which starts at 2 p.m. on Good Friday and lasts 24 hours, the devotees shoulder statues

that represent the Passion and death of Jesus Christ and carry them along the streets of Trapani through the night. Guarneri missed a few hours of the event to rest but was back by dawn—when he took this photograph. He likes the image for a number of reasons. "I like it for how it shows the

profound weariness of the devotees, for how the ratio of three statues and three bearers gives balance to the image, and for how the photo has a 'classical' approach." Guarneri says the shot reminds him of works by the late Sicilian photographer Enzo Sellerio, who documented Sicilian life,

and French photojournalist Robert Doisneau, who found excitement in everyday scenes. Guarneri, a physician, began taking pictures after his father gave him a Leica M3 camera when he was 11 years old. "I'm attracted to images of people and the places where they live." He says that his

next photography project will focus on grape harvests. (Nikon D700 camera, Nikkor 24-70 mm f/2.8 lens at 24 mm, exposure at 1/100 second, f/5, ISO 640)

Prize: Admission for one to a National Geographic Traveler photo seminar

MERIT

The Best of the Rest

Fred An, a physician who recently moved to Oregon, had seen images of an iconic maple tree in Portland's Japanese Garden. "I wanted to capture a different angle or perspective of the tree," he says. "I love this picture because it draws you into the scene in a magical way." In his free time, An enjoys going on hiking excursions around Oregon and photographing his surroundings. "I love all kinds of pictures, but any sort of landscape photography is really what I like most." (Canon EOS 5D Mark II

camera, Zeiss 21 mm f/2.8 lens, exposure at 1/100 second, f/2.8, ISO 800)

Lucia Griggi snapped her shot of a surfer diving under a wave in the Pacific waters off the coast of Fiji. "The light had turned to a late afternoon haze, and the reflections were hitting the seafloor perfectly," she recalls. "I hoped to show the differing perspective from below. So few people get to experience the beauty of what a surfer sees under the ocean's waves." Griggi, who has lived in Italy and is now based in California, would like to travel to Sri Lanka to photograph the endangered Sri Lanka leopard in its native habitat. (Canon EOS 5D Mark III camera with A-series SPL Waterhoussings housing, Canon EF 15 mm f/2.8 Fisheye lens, exposure at 1/1250 second, f/2.8, ISO 200)

SauKiang Chau, who is a teacher in Malaysia, was having coffee at a café in the Moroccan mountain town of Chefchaouene when he saw a



Fiji: A surfer duck-dives his board under a wave.



Sicily: Statue bearers pause during the Procession of the Mysteries.

Morocco: Village elders gather in Chefchaouene.



group of traditionally robed men sitting nearby. "I was intrigued by their gestures and the way they dressed," he says. Instead of moving to get a better angle, Chau stayed where he was to not disturb his subjects. "I knew it was a moment I must not miss." An important element in the shot is the spirit of friendship it reveals. "Friends are so important in our lives," Chau says, "especially as we age. When I'm old, I hope I will have friends to talk to and share with, like the Moroccan men in my photo." Chau has been to nearly 30 countries; his next trip will take him to Yemen. (Canon EOS 5D camera, Canon EF 70-200 mm f/2.8 lens at 150 mm, exposure at 1/800 second, f/2.8, ISO 400)

Peter DeMarco wanted to take a hot-air balloon ride over the ancient Buddhist temples in Bagan, Myanmar (Burma), but didn't have enough cash. "So I settled for the next best thing—a bike ride along the trails that wind

between the temples." As he was framing a shot of the temples, DeMarco heard a noise down the trail and saw a goatherd walking past with his goats. "I crouched down for a lower point of view, to give the man and the goats more emphasis." DeMarco, who has lived in Europe and Asia for the past 14 years, is a teacher at South Korea's Busan University of Foreign Studies. (Nikon D90 camera, Nikkor 18-55 mm f/3.5-5.6 lens at 32 mm, exposure at 1/640 second, f/13, ISO 200)

Camila Massu, a native of Chile who now lives in London, grabbed the shot of her sister floating in rain-pocked Lake Caburgua when they were visiting Chile's Araucania region. "One day, while we were swimming in Lake Caburgua, it suddenly began to pour," she says. "We stopped, amazed, and I took the photo." A graphic designer, Massu says she likes images that depict everyday moments and fleeting events, such as changes in the weather.

Myanmar: Goats follow a herder past a temple.



Chile: Raindrops churn up Lake Caburgua.



She adds, "One of my favorite challenges is taking photos in and out of water because of the range of variables that water introduces." (*Canon Powershot D10 camera, automatic setting*)

Ken Thorne photographed a child walking through a stand of baobab trees during a trip to the African island-nation of Madagascar. He had first visited the site at sunset, and made a point of returning in early morning. "I arrived at dawn in the mist," he says. "The sun was slowly rising, creating a lighting that was just spectacular for shooting. As I looked for the best angle to compose the baobabs, a child wrapped in a blanket came out of the fog from the distance and walked toward me." Thorne, an avid traveler, works at the Michael Smith Genome Sciences Centre, in Vancouver, Canada. (*Canon 40D camera, Canon 70-300 mm f/4-5.6 lens at 105 mm, exposure at 1/500 second, f/5.0, ISO 200*)

Ken Bower, a graphic designer and photographer from New York, got his image of a landscape with waterfall on a rare sunny day in the Danish Faroe Islands, an

archipelago that lies between Norway and Iceland some 300 miles due north of Scotland. "I had to wait for clouds to move in, to provide softer light," he says, adding that he stood on the edge of a facing cliff to include the waterfall in the shot. "I used a long exposure because I wanted to illustrate the movement of the wind against the serene sea."

He also wanted to capture the remoteness of Gásadalur, the village perched above the waterfall. "Until a tunnel was built in 2004, the people who live in Gásadalur had to make a strenuous hike over the mountains to reach the island's other villages." Bower says he is drawn to remote places in part because they are seldom photographed.

(*Canon EOS 5D Mark II, Zeiss Distagon 18 mm f/3.5 lens, exposure at 70 seconds, f/22, ISO 100*)

Merit winners receive a \$200 gift certificate for B&H Photo.



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Madagascar: Baobab trees gleam in the sun.



Faroe Islands: A waterfall threads Vágar Island.

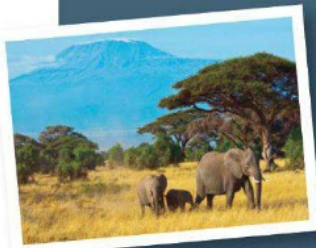


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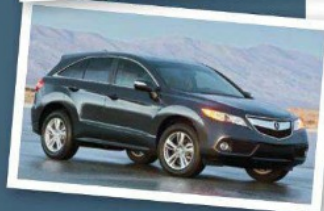
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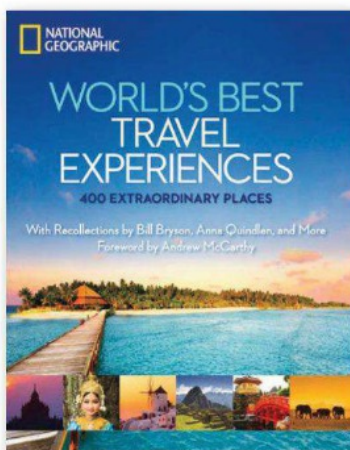


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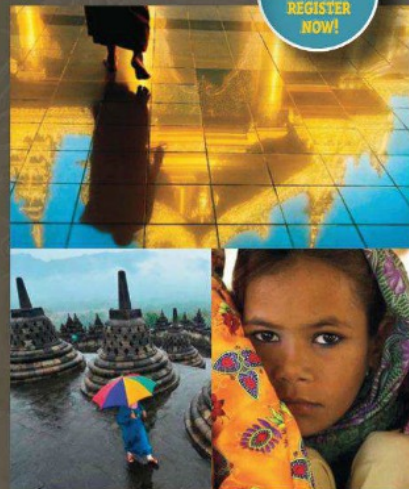
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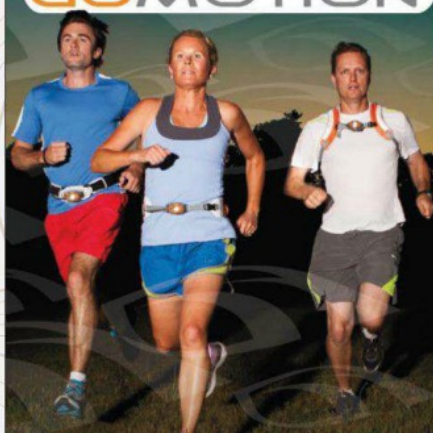
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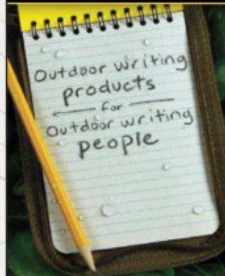
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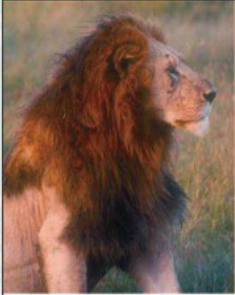
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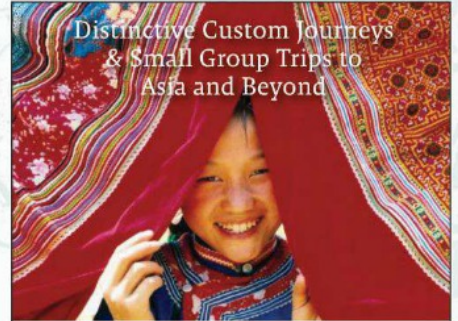
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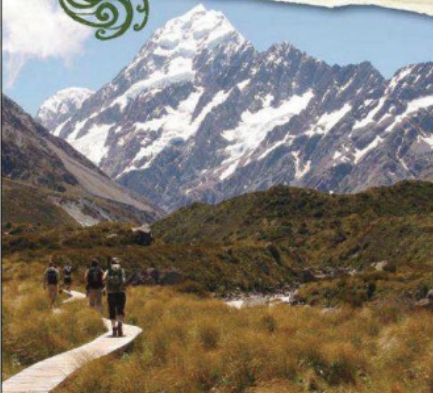
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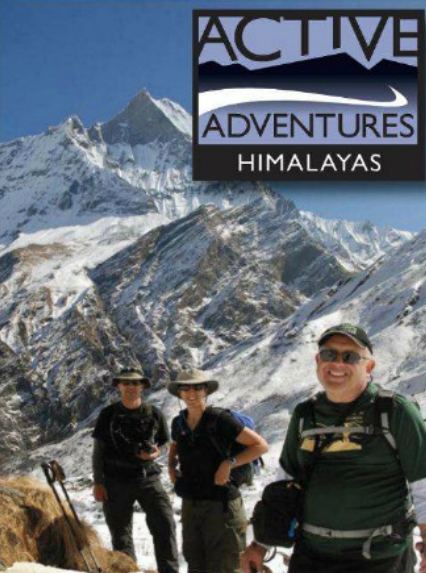


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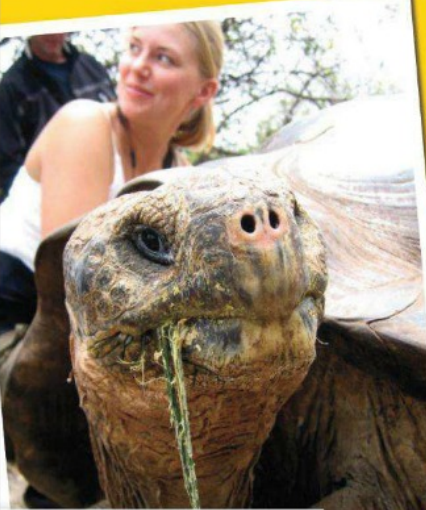
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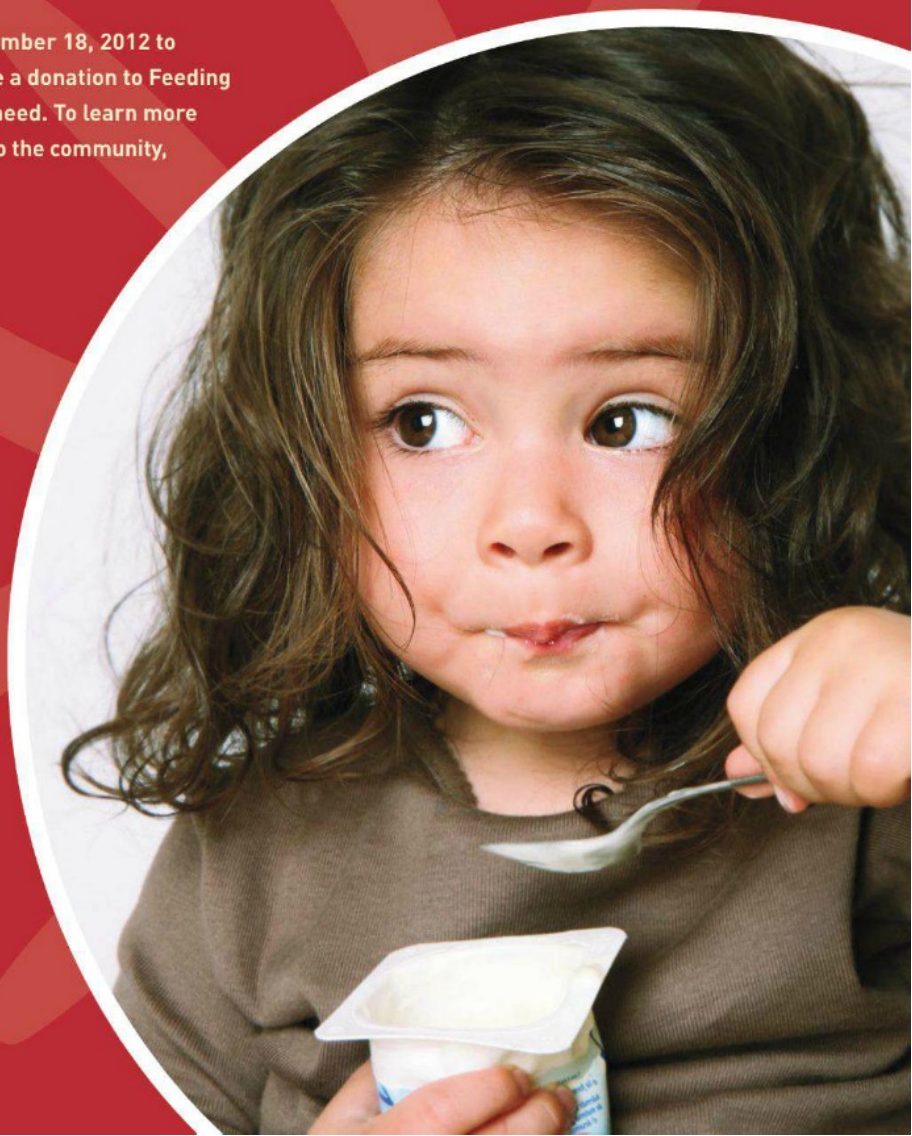


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Taj Mahal

SORROW WAS NEVER more beautiful. India's Taj Mahal, fashioned from marble and heartbreak, was built by Mogul emperor Shah Jahan as a tomb for his beloved consort, Empress Mumtaz Mahal, who died in childbirth. The bejeweled Taj, completed circa 1647 and located in the city of Agra, is considered the most ravishing example of Mogul architecture. The mausoleum has survived invading Jats and colonial Brits, who pried out the lapis during India's 1857 rebellion. They later restored the building and erected a scaffold to protect it from Axis bombing raids in WWII. The Taj now faces its deadliest enemy: environmental degradation, as the sinking water table of the Yamuna River speeds the decay of the wood base supporting the structure, threatening it with collapse. —ANDREW NELSON

BY THE NUMBERS: The bejeweled Taj Mahal took 22 years to complete and had a crew of 20,000 workers and 1,000 elephants.

DOMES VIEW: The nearly 200-foot-tall dome is actually a dome within a dome. The bulbous outer shell is much larger than the interior one. If the exterior dome were visible from inside, the Taj's symmetry would be spoiled.

GRIEF OR BELIEF? Recent theories claim the Taj was designed not to

express love but as a map to the Judgment Day interpreted by the Sufis, a mystical sect of Islam.

FAMILY FEUD: Shortly after the Taj was finished, Shah Jahan was overthrown and imprisoned by his son, who later did his filial duty and buried his father next to Mumtaz.

RESTING IN PEACE: The ornate sarcophagus that visitors see is empty. Shah Jahan's and his empress's real graves are in the tomb's lower level, hidden from tourists.

Marks on the floor indicate the tombs' locations below.

NIGHT LIGHT: The Taj can be visited after dark on the night of a full moon, and two days before or after it. The mausoleum is closed on Fridays and during Ramadan.

FREEWAY OF LOVE: Tourists' travel time from New Delhi to the industrial city of Agra was halved to about two hours last August with the opening of the six-lane Yamuna Expressway.

QUIZZABLE

Which of the following embellishments does not grace the Taj Mahal?

- a) Sapphire c) Jade
b) Platinum d) Turquoise

The first scientific description of platinum appeared in a British journal in 1750—105 years after the Taj was built.

Answer: B

FLOWER POWER: The tip of the Taj is designed to look like a lotus.

GOING GREEN: The trimmed lawns surrounding the building reflect an English tradition, not an Indian one. Before the British raj, the Taj's gardens boasted forests of banana, apple, and orange trees.

DREAMY DESCRIPTION: India's poet Rabindranath Tagore called the Taj "a teardrop on the cheeks of time."

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